

Images of Ritual Mockery on Greek Vases

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ABSTRACT

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The artifacts under consideration in this dissertation are a series of painted vases from Boeotia, Attica, and Corinth, produced in the 5th to early 3rd centuries BCE. They are Kabirion Ware kantharoi, Anthesteria choes, and Sam Wide Group cups. These vases have in common two characteristics: first, they bear images that parody, mock, or ridicule gods and heroes; and second, they were found in sanctuaries or are otherwise associable with religious ritual or ceremony. The dissertation examines the physical and ritual contexts the vases were produced for and found in, compares their imagery with other visual humor in Greek art, and surveys religious rituals involving laughing mockery in Greek and other cultures.

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All Greece is one comedian; laugh, and they
Return it louder than an ass can bray.¹

Introduction

Certain ancient artifacts are immediately comprehensible, since they had roles in ancient life which are still filled by similar objects today – plates, finger-rings, sandals, etc. Other ancient artifacts are less familiar, since they belonged to areas of life that have been eliminated or much transformed today.² The modern audience must work harder to understand the uses of a seal-stone, a loom-weight, or knuckle bones.

The artifacts that will be the subject of this dissertation fall into another category. These are the ancient objects which are hardest to understand because they are alien to our own society, contradicting some of its fundamental beliefs. It is only with much difficulty that we can try to study this type of object in its own right instead of attempting to reconcile it with our own ways of thinking about the world.

The artifacts under consideration in this dissertation are a series of painted vases from Boeotia, Attica, and Corinth, produced in the 5th to early 3rd centuries BCE. They

¹ John Dryden, translation of Juvenal's *Third Satire*, 169-170.

² I would like to thank Professors Helene Foley and David Freedberg as well the rest of my committee – Professors Joan Connelly, Francesco DeAngelis, and William V. Harris, for their invaluable comments on my drafts and project as a whole. Professors Christopher Faraone, Stephen Halliwell, Natalie Kampen, David Konstan, Clemente Marconi, and Gregory Nagy also generously and enthusiastically helped to clarify my topic. I am also grateful for the opportunity to present parts of my research at several graduate student conferences hosted by the classics departments of Harvard (2006), Brown (2005), and the University of California at Berkeley (2005), as well as during the colloquium of the classics department at Columbia (2005) and, twice, during the Art History and Archeology Departmental Symposium at Columbia (2002 and 2006). The comments of students and faculty – notably, Professor Richard Brilliant - during all of these occasions encouraged and refined my progress.

have in common two characteristics: first, they bear images that parody, mock, or ridicule gods and heroes; and second, they were found in sanctuaries or are otherwise associable with religious ritual or ceremony.

The study of Greek visual arts has historically concentrated on images of noble dignity and quiet grandeur – splendid gods, heroic struggles, expressive deaths. Thus, ancient visual humor is under-studied. Yet, Greek production of elaborate parodic images is hardly surprising, since the Greeks, from their earliest surviving works through late antiquity, were much concerned with both producing and analyzing laughter, joking, and humor in general.³ There was even a famed Greek laughing philosopher, Democritus, as well as a surviving late joke book, the *Philogelos*, “Laughter-Lover.”⁴ Plato and Aristotle,

³ Important studies of laughter in Greek culture include L. Woodbury, *Quo modo risu ridiculoque Graeci uti sint* (Diss., Harvard University, 1944); Stephen Halliwell, *Greek Laughter: Explorations in Cultural Psychology* (forthcoming; some of the material has already been published as “The uses of laughter in Greek culture,” *CQ* 41 (1991), 279-96.); Hedwig Kenner, *Weinen und Lachen in der griechischen Kunst. Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften Philosophisch-Historische Klasse*, vol. 234.2. Vienna: R.M. Rohrer, 1960. The Greek vocabulary of laughter is discussed by Antonio Lopez Eire, “Les Mots pour Exprimer L’Idée de ‘Rire’ en Grec Ancien,” in *Le rire des Grecs: anthropologie du rire en Grèce ancienne*. Ed. Marie-Laurence Desclos. Grenoble: Millon, 2000. pp. 13-43. The vocabulary of laughter in Aristophanes is discussed by Alan Sommerstein, “Parler du Rire chez Aristophane,” in *Le rire des Grecs: anthropologie du rire en Grèce ancienne*. Ed. Marie-Laurence Desclos. Grenoble: Millon, 2000. pp. 65-75.

⁴ On Democritus, see Thomas Rütten, *Demokrit: lachender Philosoph und sanguinischer Melancholiker*. Leiden and New York: E.J. Brill, 1992. For the *Philogelos*, see: Bremmer, “Jokes, Jokers and Jokebooks,” 16-18; Andreas Thierfelder, *Philogelos: Der Lachfreund*. Munich: Heimeran, 1968; Barry Baldwin, *Philogelos, or, Laughter-lover*. Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 1983.

along with other Greek philosophers, discussed and recognized the power of laughter and humor.⁵

What is surprising is the strange combination of humor and religious use in these vases. Modern culture produces frequent speeches and images that mock modern gods, but the dominant modern Western religions have no place for such religious mockery during the actual rituals of religious ceremony itself. Nor is this strangeness of recent birth, the product of the technological or social changes of the modern period, for orthodox theologians have denied laughter a place in orthodox Christianity from the Church Fathers onward. The influence of Christianity on modern conceptions of religion is so great that scholars of these vases, even those who do not profess Christianity, have uniformly tried to explain the images as either humorous but not really intended for religious use or religious but not really intended to be humorous.

By contrast, I hope in this dissertation to maintain the vases' essential link between religion and humor. This attempt at explanation will require a thorough discussion of the physical and ritual contexts the vases were produced for and found in, a comparison of their imagery with other visual humor in Greek art, and a survey of the varieties of religious rituals involving laughing mockery in Greek and other cultures. Ultimately, I will propose that these vases were used during rituals in which everyone – mortals, gods, and heroes included – was joked about by participants, visually and verbally. Though little ancient evidence for the purpose of such rituals survives, I will

⁵ For the Greeks' awareness of the potential danger of laughter, see also D. Lateiner, "No Laughing Matter: A Literary Tactic in Herodotus," *TAPA*, 107 (1977), pp. 173-82; and Halliwell, "The uses of laughter," 280.

further propose, through cross-cultural comparisons, that this type of ritual was related to agricultural and human fertility.

The study of ancient visual humor is a large task, and this dissertation does not attempt to cover all the necessary areas. The largest omission will be a thorough study of the relationship of the vase images to the fragments of Greek comedy, especially mythological comedy, though some use of the fragments will be made.

Is it Possible to Study Ancient Humor?

Since this dissertation rests heavily on the interpretation of humorous imagery, I will spend the rest of the introduction and the next chapter discussing the difficulties of studying humor and possible methodologies for doing so. Many people, scholars and laymen alike, are of the opinion that humor, though it can be easy to recognize, is impossible to recapture or to truly understand. The idea that a joke explained is no longer funny is of long-standing in modern culture, and thus that the attempt to analyze humor is itself seen as futile and humorous.⁶

Even if we no longer laugh, a studied joke is still a joke.⁷ To test a joke by our laughter would be to test it by the improper standards of our own society. The problem of

⁶ These ideas, which would not seem to need commentary, have been interestingly commented on by C.G. Prado, "Why Analysis of Humor Seems Funny," *Humor* 8.2 (1995), pp. 155-165; and Chris Powell and George E.C. Paton, ed. *Humour in Society: Resistance and Control*, ed. Houndmills, Basingstoke, and Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 1988, who write that "One typical response by both lay members of the public and by sociologists on hearing the 'humour' is someone's research topic, is a noticeable relaxation of the posture and a liberal permissive communication usually expressed by means of a joke." x.

⁷ "...let me bracket aside the whole subject of laughter. It would be wrong to suppose that the acid test of a joke is whether it provokes laughter or not. It is not necessary to go into the physiology and psychology of laughter, since it is generally recognized that one can

understanding ancient jokes in the modern world is made more difficult by a historical shifting of the frontiers of the comic, which entails fluctuations in comic domains, occasions, locations, and populations; for instance, as mentioned above, that humor has a far different role in modern religion hinders our understanding of its place in ancient ceremonies.⁸ Need we then take such a pessimistic view of our ability to understand ancient humor that we end, like Baudelaire, mistrusting our own reactions so far as to think that the ancient grotesque figurines at which we moderns laugh must have been entirely serious for the ancients?⁹ But, what is the difference between not understanding a joke and not knowing that a joke was being made?¹⁰

appreciate a joke without actually laughing, and one can laugh for other reasons than from having perceived a joke.” Mary Douglas, “The Social Control of Cognition,” *Man*, 3 (1968), pp. 361-76; reprinted as “Jokes” in her *Implicit Meanings: Selected Essays in Anthropology*. London and New York: Routledge, 2001. pp. 146-164. 148.

⁸ This idea of the shifting frontiers of the comic has been explored by Peter Burke, “Frontiers of the Comic in Early Modern Italy, c. 1350-1750,” in *A Cultural History of Humour: From Antiquity to the Present Day*, ed. Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997. Statements about the impropriety of humor during religion are easy to find; for example: “There are things so great and important in themselves, as never to be thought of and mentioned but with much sedateness and solemnity. Laughter on such occasions is criminal and indecent. . . . For instance, all jests on religion, philosophy, and the like important subjects.” George Friedrich Meier, *Thoughts on Jest*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1947. 55-56.

⁹ “Quant aux figures grotesques que nous a laissées l’antiquité, les masques, les figurines de bronze, les Hercules tout en muscles, les petits Priapes à la langue recourbée en l’air, aux oreilles pointues, tout en cercelet et en phallus, - quant à ces phallus prodigieux sur lesquels les blanches filles de Romulus montent innocemment à cheval, ces monstrueux appareils de la génération armés de sonnettes et d’ailes, je crois que toutes ces choses sont pleines de sérieux. Vénus, Pan, Hercule, n’étaient pas des personnages risibles. On en a ri après la venue de Jésus, Platon et Sénèque aidant. Je crois que l’antiquité était pleine de respect pour les tambours-majors et les faiseurs de tours de force en tout genre, et que tous les fétiches extravagants que je citais ne sont que des signes d’adoration, ou tout au plus des symboles de force, et nullement des émanations de l’esprit intentionnellement comiques.” Charles Baudelaire, *De L’essence du Rire et*

The difficulty of understanding ancient humor lies in what Cohen has called the “concision” of humor: the presumption that the audience for humor will be able to supply the requisite background knowledge to understand it.¹¹ Humor can be concise because the audience already knows certain things; thus, for example, Aristophanes can joke about Cleon without having to pause to explain who he is. Modern scholars have to expand these condensed jokes, since we no longer share the same knowledge that ancient jokers presumed their audiences would have. The same process needs to be carried out for concise visual jokes. Concision is easier to expand when we already have some of the background knowledge, which is another reason that sexual humor is easier to understand cross-culturally.¹²

It is precisely the concision of humor that makes its study so valuable. Humor is a cultural product whose formation draws from many different areas of information and

Généralement du Comique dans les Arts Plastiques. Paris: Exposition Universelle, 1855. part IV.

¹⁰ There is remarkably little attention paid to the question of how to tell if something is a joke or not. This is probably because the anthropologists and sociologists working on humor rely on the test of laughter to a greater extent than they might theoretically wish, for it is easy to label something as humorous if there are informants to laugh at it or, if questioned, tell the observer that it is supposed to be comic.

¹¹ Ted Cohen, *Jokes: Philosophical Thoughts on Joking Matters*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999. 3.

¹² For Cohen, the reason why we do not enjoy a joke in the same way if we need it to be explained to us is precisely this difference of actively supplying information, which makes us feel a part of a community, from passively receiving both the joke and the necessary background material, in which case we merely look into a community but cannot enter it. Thus Aristophanes’ jokes about sex, a subject whose requisite background knowledge has not much changed, appear to the modern reader much more laughable than his jokes about politicians, about which already Plutarch was complaining that one needed a school-master to explain.

opinion, and thus, to unpack an ancient joke is to inform ourselves about ancient culture through a different and productive lens.

“Well, and what is your forte?”
 “My forte, Mrs. Mary?”
 “Comedy? Tragedy?”
 “Either. Both come easy.”
 “The Boards, I believe, are new to you?”
 “Absolutely.”
 “Kindly stand.”
 “I’m five full feet.”
 “Say, ‘Abyssinia.’”
 “Abyssinia!”
 “As I guessed...”
 “I was never there.”
 “Now say ‘Joan’.”
 “Joan!”
 “You’re Comedy my dear, Distinctly! And now sit down.”¹³

A Methodology for Studying Greek Visual Humor

How can we identify a particular instance of ancient visual humor? This question is important enough to address at length before I move to the vases whose humor I will attempt both to identify and interpret.

In this dissertation, I adopt several tests for identifying humor. One is the universality of a comic motif across many cultures. The next uses information from Greek history and culture on the theory that if a subject is treated humorously elsewhere it is more likely to have a humorous treatment in visual arts. The third test is the application of such techniques of visual humor as I have analyzed from a large spectrum of examples of ancient visual humor: location, drawing style, body types and movements, subject-matter, and incongruity. The reader will notice that the following discussion, though directed at *identifying* visual humor, makes no attempt to *define* it. The end of this chapter will take on this issue of definitions.

¹³ Ronald Firbank, *Caprice*, in *Three More Novels*. New York: New Directions, 1986. Originally published 1917. pp. 371-372.

Universal Humor

One attempt to surmount the problem of changes in humor is to study universal or at least cross-cultural categories of humor. Ruch has analyzed jokes from different languages, identifying common uses of incongruity-resolution humor, nonsense humor, and sexual humor.¹⁴ This approach is overly broad, but does provide hints for deciphering the jokes of cultures whose humor is little understood. If most cultures produce humor from sexual matters, it is worth looking there – and that is why this dissertation, one of the first systematic investigations of Greek visual humor, will have so much to do with sexual humor – not because Greek humor was exclusively sexual, but because this type of humor, being closer to ours, is easier to understand.

Ancient theoretical writings often support our intuitions that certain types of things are likely to be universally humorous. For example, the *Tractatus Coislinianus*, a 10th century C.E. manuscript which seems reflect and amplify the fragmentary sections on comedy in Aristotle's *Poetics*, explains that laughter can arise from making something like something else: either something better, like Xanthias made to look like Heracles, or something worse, like Dionysus made to look like Xanthias.¹⁵ Other laughable things include the impossible; the possible and inconsequential; things contrary to expectation; vulgar dancing; when someone who has the power to decide lets go the most important

¹⁴ See Willibald Ruch et al., "Cross-national Comparison of Humor Categories: France and Germany," *Humor*, 4 (1991), pp. 391-414; and Willibald Ruch and Giovannantonio Forabosco, "A Cross-cultural Study of Humor Appreciation: Italy and Germany," *Humor*, 9 (1996), pp. 5-22.

¹⁵ *Tractatus Coislinianus*, 3.2.1.ii. On the *Tractatus* as a whole, see O. J. Schrier, *The Poetics of Aristotle and the Tractatus Coislinianus: A Bibliography from about 900 to 1996*. Leiden: Brill, 1998.

things and takes those most inferior; and when the argument is disjointed and lacking any sequence.¹⁶ This list analyzes the latest television sitcom as well as the comedies of Aristophanes.

And yet, these types of closeness can be misleading, for, as I will argue, even what would seem to be universal aspects of Greek sexual humor have specific and unique contents, contexts, and functions. Another answer to the question of whether we are able to understand ancient humor concerns these unique aspects, for, if we treat humor as a cultural phenomenon like any other, we can investigate it as we would those others, by seeking to understand it in its context.¹⁷

Cross-Genre Comparisons and Other Cultural Information

Genre conventions offer clues to humor by indicating what types of characters or events were common in literary humor. Ancient literary humor is fairly easy to identify, thanks to these genre conventions, since it was confined to certain types of works – plays with identifiable structures, meters, characteristic subjects; written works of standard lengths, forms, vocabulary, etc.¹⁸ Thus, for example, the involvement of Herakles in

¹⁶ *Tractatus Coislinianus*, 3.2.1.iii-ix.

¹⁷ To return to the issue of why the analysis of humor is not taken seriously, Powell and Paton suggest that it is precisely the failure to realize that humor has a social structure and processual parameters that make the attempt to analyze it seem futile. They add that the contemporary conception of humor is much more of it an individual act of creativity rather than a social phenomenon. Powell and Paton, *Humour in Society*, xi.

¹⁸ The vocabulary of ancient comedy is especially characteristic, and even very short fragments can be identified as bits of Comedies if they contain certain words. On the vocabulary of Aristophanes in particular, see Jeffrey Henderson, *Maculate Muse: Obscene Language in Attic Comedy*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975. Without these conventions literary humor is harder to decipher – witness the difficulty in deciding if even a contemporary author is slipping a joke into the middle of a serious work.

comic situations both in literature and art, or the fact that many of the Kabirion mythological parody scenes take as their subjects just those stories or characters that were also mocked in comic theater.

The test of cross-genre similarity is a convincing one, but it is surprisingly difficult to use for identifying ancient visual humor. Mostly, these similarities reinforce the identification of already obvious comic visual motifs, such as satyrs or cowardly “heroes” defecating in fear, or deities portrayed, in Dover’s words, “as Pucks and Rumpelstiltskins drawn from the nursery-stories of an unusually sophisticated, confident and irreverent nursery.”¹⁹

However, extensive study of Greek comic literature has helped little in resolving the difficult cases of ancient visual humor – those which are not easy to classify as humorous or serious. The absence of examples of visual works featuring the elements that Aristophanes mocks as hackneyed humor in the beginning of the *Frogs* is strange, as is the parallel lack of literary jokes about the dwarfish priests or other figures common to ancient visual humor. These gaps are probably due to the accidents of survival rather than signs of separate spheres of literary and visual humor. Had more of the many comedies with mythological titles survived, for instance, we would understand much more the surviving vases painted with mythological parodies.²⁰

¹⁹ K. J. Dover, *Aristophanic Comedy*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972. 30.

²⁰ A list of the mythological titles of known comedies demonstrates this lack (alphabetical by mythological subject; “and” indicates that two or more playwrights wrote comedies with the same title):
Old Comedy: *Adonis*, Nicophon and Plato; *Admetus*, Aristomenes and Theopompus; *Aegeus*, Philyllius; *Afflictions of Zeus*, Plato; *Agamemnon*, Hermippus and Nicochares; *Althaea*, Theopompus; *Amazons*, Cephisodorus; *Amymone*, Nicochares; *Anteia*, Philyllius and Eunucus; *Birth of Aphrodite*, Nicophon and Ployzelus; *Feast of Aphrodite*,

Theopompus; *Birth of Ares*, Polyzelus; *Atalanta*, Euthycles, Philyllius, and Strattis; *Atalantas*, Callias; *Birth of Athena*, Hermippus; *Auge*, Philyllius; *Autolycus*, Eupolis; *Buseiris*, Cratinus; *Callisto*, Alcaeus; *Centaur*, Aristophanes and Nicochares; *Centaurs*, Apollophanes; *Cercopes*, Hermippus and Plato; *Cheiron*, Pherecrates; *Cheirons*, Cratinus; *Chrysippus*, Strattis; *Cocalus*, Aristophanes; *Cronus*, Phrynichus; *Cyclopes*, Callias and Diocles; *Daedalus*, Plato and Aristophanes; *Danae*, Sannyrion and Apollophanes; *Danaiids*, Aristophanes; *Dionysos*, Magnes and Crates; *Birth of Dionysos*, Polyzelus; *Dionysos in Training*, Aristomenes; *Dionysos Shipwrecked*, Aristophanes; *Dionysuses*, Cratines; *Endymion*, Alcaeus; *Eumenides*, Telecleides; *Europa*, Hermippus and Plato; *Galatea*, Nicochares; *Ganymede*, Alcaeus; *Nymph of Naxos* (i.e., Ariadne), Eupolis; *Helen*, Philyllius; *Herakles*, Philyllius; *Wedding of Herakles*, Archippus; *Herakles as Bride*, Nicochares; *Herakles as Man*, Pherecrates; *Herakles as Producer*, Nicochares; *Sham Herakles*, Pherecrates; *Heroes*, Aristophanes, Chionises, and Crates; *Ino*, Sannyrion; *Io*, Plato and Sannyrion; *Medea*, Cantharus and Strattis; *Menelaus*, Plato; *Birth of the Muses*, Polyzelus; *Nausicaa*, Philyllius; *Odysseus*, Theopompus; *Odysseuses*, Cratines; *Orestes*, Strattis; *Pandora*, Nicophon; *Pasipae*, Alcaeus; *Penelope*, Theopompus; *Philoctetes*, Strattis; *Satyrs*, Ecphantides, Cratinus, Callias, and Pherecrates; *Sirens*, Theopompus and Nicophon; *Theseus*, Aristonymus and Theopompus; *Thyestes*, Diocles; *Troilus*, Strattis; *Trophonius*, Cratinus.

Middle Comedy: *Achelous*, Demonicus; *Achilles*, Philetaerus and Anaxandrides; *Adonis*, Philiscus, Araros, and Antiphanes; *Aeolus*, Antiphanes and Eriphis; *Alcestis*, Antiphanes; *Alcmaeon*, Amphis and Mnesimachus; *Amalthea*, Eubulus; *Amazons*, Epicrates; *Amphicrates*, Amphis; *Amphictyons' Meetings*, Alexis; *Anchises*, Eubulus and Anaxandrides; *Andromeda*, Antiphanes; *Antaeus*, Antiphanes; *Anteia*, Antiphanes and Alexis; *Antiope*, Eubulus; *Birth of Aphrodite*, Antiphanes; *Births of Hermes and Aphrodite*, Philiscus; *Artemis*, Ephippus; *Birth of Artemis and Apollo*, Philiscus; *Atalanta*, Philetaerus and Alexis; *Attis*, Alexis; *Auge*, Eubulus; *Autocleides as Orestes*, Timocles; *Bellerophon*, Eubulus; *Busiris*, Cratinus, Ephippus, Antiphanes, and Mnesimachus; *Caeneus*, Araros and Antiphanes; *Callisto*, Amphis; *Calypso*, Anaxilas; *Carion as Sphinx*, Eubulus; *Centaur*, Ophelion and Timocles; *Cephalus*, Philetaerus; *Cercopes*, Eubulus and Menippus; *Cheiron*, Cratinus; *Chrysis*, Antiphanes; *Circe*, Ephippus, Anaxilas, and Anaxilas; *Hector as Cottabus-Man*, Menecrates; *Cyclops*, Antiphanes; *Daedalus*, Philippis and Eubulus; *Danae*, Eubulus; *Daughters of Proteus*, Theophilus; *Demigoddess*, Epigenes; *Deucalion*, Antiphanes and Ophelion; *Dexamenus*, Amphis; *Dionysius*, Eubulus; *Birth of Dionysius*, Anaxandrides; *Dolon*, Eubulus; *Dorcis*, Alexis; *Erechtheus*, Anaxandrides; *Europa*, Eubulus; *Galatea*, Alexis; *Ganymede*, Eubulus and Antiphanes; *Geryon*, Ephippus; *Glaucis*, Eubulus. Antiphanes, and Anaxilas; *Hecate*, Nicostratus; *Helen*, Anaxandrides and Alexis; *Rape of Helen*, Alexis; *Suitors of Helen*, Alexis; *Herakles*, Anaxandrides; *Heroes*, Timocles; *Hesione*, Alexis; *Hyacanthis as Bully*, Anaxilas; *Hymenaeus*, Araros; *Io*, Anaxandrides and Anaxilas; *Ixion*, Eubulus; *Leda*, Eubulus and Sophilus; *Linus*, Alexis; *Lycon*, Antiphanes; *Medea*, Eubulus and Antiphanes; *Melanion*, Antiphanes; *Meleager*, Philetaerus and Antiphanes; *Minos*, Antiphanes and Alexis; *Muses*, Ophelion; *Nausicaa*, Eubulus; *Neoptolemus*, Theophilus; *Nereids*, Anaxandrides; *Nereus*, Anaxandrides and Anaxilas; *Nymphs*, Alexis; *Odysseus*, Anaxandrides and Eubulus; *Odysseys*, Amphis; *Odysseus at the Loom*,

Yet, surviving literary humor is often plot-dependent, with the richness of the humor lying in the developments of the story rather than in individual gags.²¹ Since visual arts show moments, not stories (*pace* Lessing), perhaps we should not after all be surprised that the techniques of literary and visual humor were different, or focused on different subjects.

More useful for analyzing visual humor are less direct comparisons with literary techniques, such as the comic technique of incongruous substitutions of low for high objects – to be discussed later.

Other cultural and historical information can also indicate when a certain subject has been regarded in other than a strictly serious light, as we will see, below, for scenes of the recovery of Helen. However, this type of information is rarely enough to firmly identify an otherwise ambiguous subject as humorous.

Alexis; *Washing of Odysseus*, Alexis; *Oedipus*, Eubulus; *Oenomaus*, Eubulus and Antiphanes; *Oenopion*, Philetarus and Nicostratus; *Omphales*, Antiphanes and Cratinus; *Opora*, Amphis and Alexis; *Orestautocleides*, Timocles; *Orestes*, Alexis; *Orpheus*, Antiphanes; *Orthannes*, Eubulus; Pamphilus, Eubulus; *Birth of Pan*, Phiscus and Araros; *Pandarus*, Nicostratus and Anaxandrides; *Pandrosus*, Nicostratus and Clearchus; *Peirithous*, Aristophon; *Pelops*, Eubulus and Antiphanes; *Phaeon*, Antiphanes; *Philoctetes*(?), Antiphanes; *Plutus*, Nicostratus; *Priapus*, Xenarchus; *Procris*, Eubulus; *Protesilaus*, Anaxandrides; *Sciron*, Alexis; *Semele*, Eubulus; *Seven Against Thebes*, Amphis and Alexis; *Tereus*, Philatarus and Anaxandrides; *Thais*, Hipparchus; *Thamyras*, Antiphanes; *Theseus*, Anaxandrides; *Titans*, Eubulus; *Titans*, Cratinus; *Trophonios*, Alexis; *Tychon*, Antiphanes; *Tyndareus*, Alexis and Sophilus; *Uranus*, Amphis; *Xuthus*, Eubulus. Compiled from J.M. Edmonds *The Fragments of Attic Comedy*. Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1957.

²¹ E.g., see Dover's analysis of what he considers the two most important elements in Aristophanes' humor: "the fulfillment of a grandiose ambition by a character with whom the average member of the audience can identify himself, and its fulfillment by supernatural means which, although treated casually, overturn many of those sequences of cause and effect with which we are familiar in ordinary life." Dover, *Aristophanic Comedy*, 30. Neither of these tropes could be represented with as much success in a single vase scene.

Example: Warriors Dicing

One good example of the difficulties of analyzing the tone of an ambiguous scene using only the preceding tests is the group of scenes of Ajax and Achilles or anonymous warriors dicing. The most well-known example is black figure amphora signed by Exekias, which has been praised since its discovery in an Etruscan tomb in 1834 as one of the most beautifully executed surviving works of Greek art.²² (fig. 2.1) On one side, the vase shows Castor and Polydeukes, either arriving home or departing from their parents, Leda and Tyndareus. On the other side, the heroes Achilles and Ajax sit on blocks on either side of a table. They are dressed in armor and cloaks whose elaborate patterns show Exekias' masterful skill, but despite this battle dress, they are engaged in playing a dicing game on the table; this is clear from their positions and accessories as well as from the inscriptions which not only name the figures but also to indicate that Ajax is calling out "Three!" while Achilles trumps him with "Four!"²³ Scholars have praised the details and composition of the scene, even writing that this amphora raised

²² Museo Gregoriano Etrusco, 344. For its discovery, see F. Buranelli, *Gli scavi a Vulci della societa Vincenzo Campanari-Governo Pontificio 1835-1837*, Rome, 1991, p. 13, and FR III, 64.

²³ "Dicing" is used in this chapter as a generic term to cover all games of chance in which pieces are thrown to obtain numbers. The Greeks used both dice and knucklebones for this purpose, and sometimes the vase-scenes indicate one or the other, e.g. when the heroes crouch on the ground with no table, it is probable that they are meant to be playing knucklebones. For the purposes of this discussion it is not necessary to discriminate, since dice and knucklebones seem to have held similar places in Greek thought. For more information about the types of games played by the Greeks, see H.J.R. Murray, *A History of Board Games other than Chess* (Oxford 1952) and R.G. Austin, "Greek Board Games," *Antiquity* xiv (1940).

vase-painting to the level of a major art like sculpture or mural painting.²⁴ Exekias painted an early and undoubtedly influential example of the scene of Ajax and Achilles dicing, but his vase is followed by over 150 other examples of the scene in the years between c.540 – c.480 B.C.E.²⁵ (fig. 2.2-2.6) The scene has no known literary precedent.

So how should we interpret it?

Ancient sources reveal widely varied attitudes towards dicing. Scholars of the Exekias' works have given a widely-accepted interpretation of the scene as a psychological study of the heroes, shown distracting themselves from the tensions of the Trojan war in a game

²⁴ For example, see John Boardman, who wrote that Exekias painted figures with “a near statuesque dignity which brings vase painting for the first time close to claiming a place as a major art.” *Athenian Black Figure Vases*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1974. 57. Ernst Pfuhl calls Exekias “a true artist”, whose Vatican amphora “is a high-water mark of the art of its time”. *Masterpieces of Greek Drawing and Painting*. Trans. J.D. Beazley. New York: Hacker Art Books, 1979. 26. Furtwängler calls it Exekias’ “Meisterstück.” FR, III, 65.

²⁵ Anneliese Kossatz-Deissmann, LIMC I (1981), s.v. “Achilleus,” no. 391-427. 96-104. Some of these other vases also have inscriptions identifying the players as Ajax and Achilles, and no vase with inscriptions names the players anything but Ajax and Achilles; however, most vases have no inscriptions. On inscriptionless vases, the players could arguably be generic heroes or even mortal hoplites, but as this would not ultimately much change the argument made here, I will refer to all players as “Ajax” and “Achilles”. The scene also appears in other media than vase-painting: dicing heroes are also featured in Polygnotos’ mural painting in the Stoa Poikile and on several archaic shield benders from Olympia, both discussed below. The only other possible appearance is a very fragmentary marble statuary group from the later 6th c. from the Acropolis which has been reconstructed as Achilles and Ajax dicing with Athena. See H. Schrader, *Archaische Marmor-Skulpturen im Akropolis-Museum zu Athen* (Vienna 1909) 67-71; Karl Schefold, “Statuen auf Vasenbildern”, *Jdl* 52 (1937) 30-33, and D.L. Thompson, “Exekias and the Brettspieler”, *Archeologia Classica*. xxvii (1976), 30-9. The uncertainty of the identification is shown by Picard, who thinks that the players are merely mortals celebrating the Anthesteria by dicing in front of a statue of Athena, and Deonna, who reconstructs these flanking figures as widely-separated charioteers. C. Picard, “Les antécédents des ‘Astragalizontes’ poluclétéens et la consultation par les dés,” *REG* 42 (1929), 121ff; W. Deonna, “Astragalizontes? Group isolé ou fronton?,” *REG* 43 (1930) 384f.

of chance which foreshadows the reversal in fortunes and eminent death of Achilles as well as the fate of Ajax, who will commit suicide after losing the armor of Achilles to Odysseus, even as he is now shown losing to Achilles.²⁶ This interpretation depends heavily on a fragment of Herakleitos which compares life to a child playing a game of *pestoi* with gaming pieces.²⁷ Despite the differences between these versions and that of Exekias, the same psychological interpretation has been extended to the whole group.

Other ancient sources mention dice in a favorable light, as the inventions of gods or heroes, and as a divinatory device in sanctuaries.²⁸ There is one unambiguously serious

²⁶ The first detailed studies of the dicing motif are those of Schefold and Beazley: Karl Schefold, "Statuen auf Vasenbildern", *JDAI* 52 (1937), pp. 30ff; J.D. Beazley, *Attic Black-Figure Vase-Painters* (Oxford 1956) 723 (Index II: 'Ajax and Achilles Playing'). See also Karl Schefold, *Gods and Heroes in Late Archaic Greek Art*, trans. Alan Griffiths, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp.271-5, with especial note to his characteristic over-reading of Vatican 343.

²⁷ Herakleitos B 52 D-K.

²⁸ Dice appear on the lists of inventions of various mythological craftsmen: not only the Greek hero Palamedes but also the (disreputable) Nauplius and even the Egyptian god Theuth were said to have invented dice. Palamedes: Paus. 2.20.3, Paus. 10.31.1; Nauplius: Sophocles frg. 432; Theuth: Plato, *Phaedrus*, 274c-d. These craftsmen are also variously credited with the inventions of weights, numbers, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, letters, and writing. By their placement in such lists, dice are shown to be part of the continuing Greek fascination with numbers and mathematical calculations. The connection between dicing, mathematics, and astronomy also helps to explain why Hermes is said to have created the intercalendary days by winning that period of time from the Moon while playing dice: Plutarch, *Moralia*, 355D. An alternative origin story is preserved in Herodotus, who writes that the Lydians claim that they invented dicing and the other games played by the Greeks because, when there was a famine, they ate on one day and diced on the next in order to distract themselves from their hunger. (*History*, 1.94) Plutarch, for one, is not terribly impressed with this story, holding that a scholarly man should be able to put away thoughts of hunger without such diversions: *Moralia*, 132F. Only one of these origin myths ascribes a use for dices – Palamedes was said to have invented them to help the Greek soldiers pass the time while waiting for favorable winds at Aulis on the way to Troy: Philostr. *Her.* 10; Paus. 2.20.3 and 10.31.1; Schol. on Euripides *Orest.* 422.

portrayal of heroes dicing in Greek literature, in Euripides' tragedy *Iphigeneia in Aulis*.

There, the chorus sings about coming to Aulis and seeing the heroes, among whom Protesilaus and Palamedes play dice.²⁹ Whatever Palamedes' reputation might be, Protesilaus, although unfortunate (he will be the first Greek to be killed at Troy), is a respectable hero, and their game appears in the middle of a description of other heroes engaged in normal heroic preparatory activity. Polygnotos' mural painting of the underworld in the *Lesche* of the Knidians in Delphi (c. 450) also featured dicing heroes. This painting survives only in a description by Pausanias, who writes about a group in the upper part of the wall of "Ajax of Salamis, and also Palamedes and Thersites playing with dice, the invention of Palamedes; the other Ajax is looking at them as they play."³⁰ The inclusion of the disreputable Thersites among the dicers is perhaps a clue to the meaning of their activity, but the dicing could equally be understood as a means of passing the time, since, in Hades as at Aulis, there is not much for the heroes to do.

Dice in religious practice: Pausanias describes a sanctuary of Herakles near the river Buraicus in which one could obtain an oracle by means of throwing dice, reading the different meanings of the different throws from a tablet in the shrine: Pausanias 7.25.10. Pausanias also writes about sanctuary of the Graces of the Eleans in which one held a rose, another a branch of myrtle, and the third a die, apparently signifying fortune: Pausanias 6.24.6. The theme of dicing with the gods to obtain an oracle is mythologized in Herodotus' story of Rhampsinitus, the Egyptian king who descended to Hades and played dice with Demeter, bringing back as a prize a golden napkin: *History*, 2.122. The connection of dice and religion takes a humorous turn in another story from Plutarch, who says that once a keeper of a temple of Herakles proposed a game of dice to the god, wagering a dinner and a girl; the man lost, and as promised, prepared a banquet for the god and brought him a beautiful prostitute, who then claimed that the god had well enjoyed himself: Plut. *Romulus* 5.1 f.

²⁹ *Iphigeneia in Aulis*, 194.

³⁰ Pausanias 10.31.1

The preceding sources treated dice in a favorable light, but other sources routinely treat dicing as either the forgivable occupation of children, slaves, or old men, or the vicious pursuit of luxurious idlers. Greek comedy, whose actors frequently mocked specific audience members, accuses certain people of being dicers, paralleling this activity with gluttonous gormandizing, alcoholism, consorting with prostitutes, and inappropriate homosexuality.³¹ Prostitutes diced.³² Other comedies put dicing in equally vicious company; for example, when a character of Aristophanes' lists the things that would disappear if the Athenians did not have private property, she includes ruinous lawsuits, fighting on the streets, theft, and dicing (since there would be no point in playing if there was no money to win).³³ In the *Argonautica*, Cupid and Ganymede are described as playing dice "as boys in one house are wont to do"; however, Cupid is cheating, and is described as greedy (*laihs*) and is scolded by Aphrodite, who calls him

³¹ "Philetaerus says in this *Asclepius* that the orator Hypereides was not only an epicure but a dicer." Athenaeus, 8.342a. Athenaeus also quotes lines from the comic poet Theopompus: "Give up the dice, and dose yourself, my lad/ You're constipated. Shun rockfish; it's bad./ For stoppage of wits take cheap poor wine;/ If you do this you'll soon be easier in your affairs." Athenaeus, 14.649b. Trans. John Edmonds, *The Fragments of Attic Comedy*. Volume I. Leiden: Brill, 1957. In the *Plautus*, the personification on Wealth complains of being wasted on "dicing and wenching" (*Plautus*, 239-41). Also in Aristophanes, in his *Wasps*, the slave Xanthias asks the audience if they can guess the affliction suffered by his master's father, pretending to hear certain prominent audience members shout out their own manias. Dercylus is by this means mocked for his drinking, Nicostatus for gluttony, and Amynias for dicing. (*Wasps*, 74-84) Of course, it is well known that most free males in Athens in this period engaged in occasional drinking and pederasty and thus, it is probably safe to assume, in occasional dicing as well. Aristophanes' point seems to be that the men in question pursue these pleasures excessively and are thus unfit for public office or trust.

³² Athenaeus, 6.247a.

³³ *Eccl.* 672-673. We might also assume that some plays from middle comedy from which only the title survives also dealt with these themes, since Eubulus, Antiphanes, Amphis, and Alexis wrote comedies called *The Dicers*.

aphatov kakov and asks if he has unjustly won.³⁴ That dicing is a game of children, but that even there it can go wrong is supported by Homer's story of how Patroklos, as a child, had to go into exile because he killed Amphi-damas' son in a fit of anger during a dicing game.³⁵ Dicing, from its literary mentions, seems to have been played in the Greek world mainly during the symposium or at least in symposiastic contexts, and indeed that dice were nicknamed "Dionysiac nuts" indicates their close connection to the Dionysiac realm of the symposium.³⁶

Numerous as mentions of dicing in literature are, there is only one instance which offers a direct connection to the subject of Ajax and Achilles playing. This is in Aristophanes' *Frogs* during the final stage of the contest between Aeschylus and Euripides, when they are offering lines of their own poetry to be weighed. Euripides, who seems to be badly losing, becomes stuck for an idea in the final round, and the god Dionysus, acting as judge, says to him "What about that stirring line 'Achilles threw two singles and a four'?"³⁷ Euripides does not take this suggestion, but ancient commentators thought that Dionysus must have been prompting the poet with a line from one of his own plays, and thus suggested various sources, most plausibly his *Philoktetes* or *Iphigeneia in Aulis*, although the line is not in the surviving text, or his fragmentary play *Telephos*.

³⁴ Apollo. Rhod. 3.114-126

³⁵ Hom, *Il.* 23.87-88.

³⁶ To play a game with "Dionysiac nuts" was to throw a cherry pit or knucklebone or dice into a hole from a certain distance: Schol. Plat. *Symp.* 174b quoting from Cratines' *Pylaea*. John Edmonds, *The Fragments of Attic Comedy*. Volume I. Leiden: Brill, 1957. 83.

³⁷ *Frogs*, 1400. Trans. David Barrett, *Aristophanes: The Frogs and Other Plays* (New York: Penguin, 1964).

There are, however, equally convincing reasons to consider Dionysus' suggestion as not quite serious, nor even a quotation. First there is Dionysus' function in the contest scene as not only a judge but also a comic commentator. Most of the jokes in this scene are delivered through his character, and this interjection may easily be another joke. Next is the impossibility of locating the line in the works of Euripides – the difficulty is not only ours but was also faced by the ancient commentators, who could consult much more of his oeuvre. That they could not find it there implies to Dover, in his recent commentary on the *Frogs*, that they sought it in vain, and that the line is a joke.³⁸ The ancient scholars connected the phrase “two singles and a four” with the same phrase in a line from the comic poet Eupolis, and Dover suggests that Aristophanes uses the phrase to make one of his characteristic comic substitutions.³⁹ That is, the line begins “Achilles threw...,” and the audience, expecting a line from tragedy, would also expect some heroic object – a spear, an heroically large rock – but get instead non-heroic dice. The joke is completed by the throw being a low-scoring one.

Are we to interpret the scenes of warriors dicing as part of Greek respect for or condemnation of dicing? The literary and historical sources are so divided that they present no conclusive evidence. But, as I will attempt to show, an analysis of Greek visual humor will indicate ways in which to better decide these ambiguities.

³⁸ Aristophanes, *Frogs*, edited with commentary by Kenneth Dover. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997. 221-222.

³⁹ Schol. Ar. *Frogs*. 1400: “Eupolis, too, shows that he knows this passage: ‘Lost, ruined, by two aces and a four’.” John Edmonds, *The Fragments of Attic Comedy*. Vol. I. Leiden: Brill, 1957. 429. This parodic connection with Eupolis is the most convincing evidence that the line is actually a construction of Aristophanes' and not a quotation from a lost satyr play, a possibility considered by M.A. van der Valk, in J. den Boeft and A.H.M. Kessels (eds.), *Actus: Studies in Honour of H.L.W. Nelson* (Utrecht, 1982) 420.

Techniques of Greek Visual Humor

Greek literary comedy can usually be identified by its genre conventions, but the conventions of ancient visual art are not so well understood. The following discussions of some basic components of Greek visual humor pulls together much scattered scholarship and makes new contributions, and thus I think it worthwhile to include them at some length before we move to the main topics of this dissertation. When noted, the identifications of images as humorous are the work of prior scholars; otherwise, they are my own.

Location

Humor is more likely to appear on some vehicles than others – there are more jokes on bumper stickers than tombstones, for instance.⁴⁰ Accordingly, the first job for a study of proposedly humorous images on vases is to demonstrate that the Greeks thought vases proper locations for humor. Fortunately, this is fairly uncontroversial. That vases were commonly thought of as potential locations for humor is shown by various non-figural examples of wit. One oinochoe by the prolific painter Lydos is comparable to the modern dribble-cup, since its interior is arranged in such a way that when an air hole in the handle is uncovered when a joker hands the jug to an unsuspecting companion, the wine inside trickles out of the base, into the victim's lap.⁴¹ On other vases, inscriptions

⁴⁰ E.g., Wright wrote that pictorial caricature is “of course” rare on public monuments, and must be looked for instead on “objects of a more popular character and to articles of common use” – he points to Greek painted pottery and Roman domestic wall-painting. Thomas Wright, *A History of Caricature and Grotesque in Literature and Art*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1875. 15.

⁴¹ Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Antikensammlungen, 1732. On this and other trick vases, see Lissarague, *Aesthetics of the Greek Banquet*, chapter 3: “Manipulations.”

add humor, as when Oltos inscribed a psykter with “*po me*,” “drink me” and “*xasko*,” “I open my mouth wide.”⁴² On other vases, the artists arranged decorative details to make faces, with handles for eyebrows on a “Melian” amphora in Athens, or added mustachios on a lekythos in Berlin.⁴³ (fig. 2.7) Other vases jokingly integrate decorative details into the action. Heraldic sphinxes, for example, often framed scenes on cups, but at least one artist emphasized the common Greek joke about the insatiability of satyrs by painting a satyr on one of his cups so lustful as to attack a framing decorative sphinx, while on a band cup in Rome, the sphinxes turn, surprised by hunters.⁴⁴ (fig. 2.8-2.9)

Other artists took advantage of the plasticity of clay to create humorous appendages for their vases. A krater decorated by the Dinos Painter features three large attached phalloi, one of which acts as the handle to the lid.⁴⁵ (fig. 2.10) Similarly, the well-known Bomford Cup rests not on a usual cup-foot but instead on a plastic representation of male genitals, a surprise revealed when the drinker grasped them as a handle.⁴⁶ The also well-known ‘head vases’ – kantharoi molded in the shape of heads –

⁴² New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 10.210.18. BA # 200439.

⁴³ “Melian” amphora: Athens, National Museum, 354; see Boardman, *Early Greek Vase-Painting*, 111. Lekythos: Berlin, , Staatliche Museen, Antikensammlungen, inv. no. unknown.

⁴⁴ Sphinx and satyr: Berlin, Antikensammlung, 1964.4. BA # 275638. Sphinx and hunters: Rome, Mus. Naz. Etrusco di Villa Giulia, 50699. BA # 302496. Examples of such play with decorative elements (not including this sphinx and hunters cup) are collected by Alexandre Mitchell, “Humour in Greek Vase-Painting,” 5-10.

⁴⁵ Ferrara, Museo Nazionale di Spina, 16746. BA # 215263. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Beazley Archive neither features a picture nor describes these adjuncts.

⁴⁶ “Bomford cup”: Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, no inv. no. Robin Osborne. *Archaic and Classical Greek Art*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. 133-4.

are definite examples of visual wit, with scruffy satyrs turning into sleek maenads or Ethiopians.⁴⁷ In the *Wasps*, the old-fashioned Proclean defends himself against his son's arguments in favor of a luxurious life by producing a wine vessel in the shape of a donkey: "if you don't pour me any wine, I've got my donkey here. Just tilt and pour. You see what he thinks of you and your goblets!" (1.615ff) This perhaps suggests that plastic vessels were the property of a certain level of popular culture, not aspiring to fineware, and that they were perhaps thought to be humorous in themselves, or could at least be manipulated in the service of humor (a not very difficult task, one would imagine, for an aryballos shaped like a penis, for example).

Finally, the way that a cup, held up by a drinker, covers the face, was exploited by many painters, who created mask-like effects by the combination of painted eyes with handles and the hollow foot. (fig. 2.11)

A more complicated question is whether certain vase forms are more likely to carry humorous images than others, as, for example, European painters have traditionally used small canvases for erotic or genre subjects, reserving large canvases for historical scenes.⁴⁸ The answer to this question is by no means clear. Further study is needed; pelikes, for instance, often feature humorous scenes, as we will see, below.

⁴⁷ For example, Cleveland, Cleveland Museum of Art 1979.69. BA # 10160. On these kantharoi, see Klaus Vierneisel and Bert Caesar, *Kunst der Schale: Kultur des Trinkens*. Munich: Antikensammlungen, 1990.

⁴⁸ For argued connections between the characteristic decorations of certain shapes and the function of these vases see I. Scheibler, "Bild und Gefäß: Zur ikonographischen und funktionalen Bedeutung attischer Bildfeldamphoren." *JdI* 71, 1951, 40-47; and H. Alan Shapiro, "Correlating Shape and Subject: The Case of the Archaic Pelike," in *Athenian Potters and Painters, The Conference Proceedings*, ed. John Oakley, William Coulson, and Olga Palagia. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1994. pp. 63-70.

Another aspect of location to consider is the location in relation to other scenes on the same object. For example, in European art, humorous details often appear in small side sections of larger works, or in places hard to see from non-privileged view-points (such as the gargoyles of Gothic cathedrals). Proximity also gives clues to deciding whether a scene is humorous or not, since a humorous and a serious scene rarely have equally prominence and placement on a single work in most artistic traditions (imagine a diptych with a Crucifixion on one wing and a tavern scene on the other). Thus, one possible test for humor in Greek vase-painting is looking at the two scenes paired on each side of most painted vases. An ambiguous scene may be less likely to be humorous if paired with an undoubtedly serious scene. Some vases clearly show a tendency to pair serious with serious.⁴⁹

One good example is the scene of Ajax carrying the body of Achilles, of which about 150 examples survive (compared to about 80 examples of dicing warriors). This subject is unquestionably solemn and always described in literary sources as humane and heroic act, filled with pathos, since to rescue the body of a companion from the humiliation of looting and possible desecration was considered by the Greeks as an action of high bravery and friendship.⁵⁰ As far as I am aware, this subject is not mocked or

⁴⁹ Location is also important within scenes; see, for example, a pelike with a strange scene of a satyr molesting a girl on one side and an old man at a well on the other; Shapiro has pointed out the “comic contrast between the randy satyr at the left and the old man at right who struggles to raise a water pail but can no longer get it up.” Rome, Vatican Museums, 413. BA # 31764. H. Alan Shapiro, “Correlating Shape and Subject: The Case of the Archaic Pelike,” in *Athenian Potters and Painters, The Conference Proceedings*, ed. John Oakley, William Coulson, and Olga Palagia. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1994. pp. 63-70. 65.

⁵⁰ Jean Pierre Vernant, “A ‘Beautiful Death’ and the Disfigured Corpse in Homeric Epic,” in *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays*, ed. F. Zeitlin. Princeton: Princeton

parodied in existing art or literature.⁵¹ Almost 70% of the rescue scenes are painted on amphorae, a large and impressive vase type; only about 35% of dicing scenes are painted on similar amphorae.⁵² Greek amphorae were generally more skillfully painted than other smaller, presumably less expensive, vase forms. Only 11% of the rescue scenes are painted on small, poorly-executed lekythoi, as opposed to 28% of dicing scenes.⁵³ These definite percentage differences between two scenes, both featuring Achilles and Ajax, suggests a difference in treatment. Perhaps the most significant difference is in the respective percentage of appearances of the scenes on wine cups. Scenes of warriors dicing are twice as likely to appear on cups (14%) than are rescue scenes (7%).⁵⁴ This difference indicates a different context of viewing for the scenes, with symposiasts more likely to have chosen dicing scenes for their parties.⁵⁵

University Press, 1991. For the practicalities of death in battle, see Pamela Vaughn, "The Identification and Retrieval of the Hoplite Battle-dead," in *Hoplites: The Classical Greek Battle Experience*, ed. M.H. Hanson. New York: Routledge, 1991. pp. 38-62.

⁵¹ With the possible exception of San Simeon (CA), Hearst Historical State Monument, 9848, an amphora which pairs Ajax carrying Achilles on one side with a satyr lifting a maenad on the other, without, however, much visual resemblance.

⁵² Of the 146 dicing vases listed in the Beazley Archive, 51 are painted on amphorae (35%); of 83 total rescue scenes, 56 are on amphorae (67%).

⁵³ Rescue scenes: 9 lekythoi. Dicing scenes: 41 lekythoi.

⁵⁴ Dicing scenes: 21 cups. Rescue scenes: 6 cups.

⁵⁵ The lekythoi might also have had a sympotic use, since several ancient sources mention that oil was used to anoint the genitals before or after sex: Galen, *On the conservation of health*, 6.14.6 and 3.13.13; Aristophanes, *Acharnians*, 1063). Keuls mentions this, though she over-interprets vase paintings featuring oil flasks: Eva C. Keuls, *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens*. New York: Harper and Row, 1985. 120.

One some examples of the dicing warriors scene, the location of the scene in relation to the scenes on the vase can give additional information. A plate in Berlin has the warriors dicing in its tondo, while the inside rim is divided into two scenes, one of cock-fighting and the other of erotic encounters.⁵⁶ (fig. 2.12) The cocks are placed above the warrior's moving arms and the central erotic pair, a man pursuing a still-clothed yet seemingly willing woman, lies beneath them. The composition clearly parallels these scenes, perhaps as illustrations of various types of enjoyable pursuits or even 'contests.'⁵⁷

Drawing Style

A caricature drawing style, in which figures are shown with grotesque bodies, is a visual cue for humor. In antiquity as now, this type of drawing alerts the viewer that the scene will be humorous.⁵⁸ Ancient artists used different, though related, caricature drawing style. Here, I will describe the styles of Kabirion, Anthesteria, and Sam Wide vases.

The Kabirion ware cups were painted in black-figure with much use of incision and thick, hasty brushstrokes. The glaze used for the figures is sometimes very thin,

⁵⁶ Berlin, Antikensammlung, 3267. BA # 300833.

⁵⁷ For another instance of a subsidiary cock-fight paralleling and commenting on the action of the main scene, see Boardman's comments on a black figure plate (Oxford 1934.333; BA # 310237) in John Boardman, "Boy Meets Girl: An Iconographic Encounter," in *Athenian Potters and Painters, The Conference Proceedings*, ed. John Oakley, William Coulson, and Olga Palagia. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1994. pp. 259-267.

⁵⁸ There have been attempts to categorize the style of modern visual humor: see Ken Smith, "Laughing at the Way We See: The Role of Visual Organizing Principles in Cartoon Humor," *Humor* 9.1 (1996), pp. 19-38. This article argues that modern cartoons use the gestalts of similarity, proximity, continuation, closure, figure-ground, common fate. Their application to the very different drawing conventions of antiquity is problematic.

adding to the impression of hasty painting. The hastiness of the style both adds to the humor of the scenes and suggests a heavy production-load for the Kabirion workshops.

However quickly they may have painted, the Kabirion artists did not lack skill. In general, their scenes show an economy of detail, carefully chosen for its expressive possibilities. Landscape elements and clothing or other accessories are usually reduced to the bare minimum of sketchy indications, to keep the focus on the bodies.

The artists use swooping, rounded lines to render the chubby bodies, and choppy straight, hasty lines to add limbs and facial features. The feet and hands often trail away into faint points, and the skinny, angular legs suggest awkward, marionette-like motions. Instead of Greek art's usual careful rendering of muscles, the Kabirion artists lavished their attention on bony backs or saggy, bumpy flesh. As well, most Kabirion figures sport large circles on their chests to indicate their nipples instead of the usual small dots seen on the taut chests of heroic Greek nudes.

The majority of the faces are in profile, with large incised eyes. The artists show great skill in manipulating the profile outline to suggest a variety of noses – slanted, skewed, broken, or bulbous - and lips, which usually suggest slack-jawed astonishment or howls of rage or hilarity.

The Anthesteria choes are in red-figure, so their style shows obvious differences from that of the Kabirion vases. However, these painters still maintain some of the same techniques, such as making the limbs too short or too scrawny to support the figures' large torsos. As well, the more grotesque Anthesteria figures have large eyes, though their heads tend to be too large for their bodies instead of too small, as were the Kabirion

figures'. As well, details of clothes, accessories, and setting are more carefully painted than on the Kabirion vases.

On most Anthesteria vases, the figures are not grotesque. They resemble the men and women of non-humorous Attic painting – though perhaps they are a bit less slim. But they do differ in posture. Like the Kabirion figures, the Anthesteria figures bend, crouch, run, sway, and gesture to a much greater extent than their serious compatriots. The careful rendering of the Anthesteria painters is used to good effect when the realistic runs into the absurd, such as a painstaking donkey head perched atop a bird's body. (fig. 2.13) The closeness to serious Attic style suggests that the Anthesteria vases were painted not by specialists in humorous scenes but rather as a sideline in normal workshops.

The Sam Wide vases are painted in monochrome on a white background, and their artists took advantage of the opportunity for small caricature details this technique offered, especially for facial features: snub noses, freckles, lowering brows, cauliflower ears, or even incongruously doll-like eyelashes on a Herakles. Clothes and accessories are sometimes indicated in detail, but with rather mechanical repetitions of patterns. For the bodies, the emphasis is on the outline, with muscles indicated by lines that look almost like incisions. As with the Kabirion figures, the torso is of the most interest, while hands and feet are only sketchily indicated. The drawing as a whole looks rather hurried – for instance, solid surfaces are rarely filled in, but only roughly hatched. However, the meticulous details of some clothing shows us that the artists were not as hurried as those of the Kabirion workshops.

Body Types

The most common type of modern visual humor is caricature – the making of bodies humorously grotesque through distortions of expression and limb.⁵⁹ There are a number of deformed bodies with appearances similar to modern caricatures in Greek visual art, some with obvious humorous intent and other more ambiguous images.⁶⁰ Both types of bodies – the humorously grotesque and the merely deformed - are important to note here, since the vases discussed in this dissertation have many striking examples of such bodies.

First, though, a note on vocabulary. I will use the word “grotesque” to describe the drawing style of some Greek vases and body types of some of the figures on them. Considered historically, this is an inappropriate use, since the English word derives from the Italian *grottesca*, meaning a type of painting appropriate to grottos, those “grottos” being the excavated rooms of ancient Roman buildings, painted with decorative figures

⁵⁹ A valuable survey of grotesque bodies in modern visual art is that of Gerd Unverfehrt, “Groteske: Körper und Köpfe,” in *Bild als Waffe: Mittel und Motive der Karikatur in fünf Jahrhunderte*, ed. Gerhard Langemeyer et. al. Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1984. pp. 19-42. Unverfehrt shows that the whole history of western grotesque caricature uses the same general strategies of caricaturing the body, giving it an exaggerated head and features, puny limbs, large belly, and prominent genitals.

⁶⁰ The grotesque or deformed body in antiquity has been most thoroughly discussed by Robert Garland, *The Eye of the Beholder: Deformity and Disability in the Graeco-Roman World*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995; and Véronique Dasen, *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993. Caricature in Athenian vase-painting specifically is discussed by Alexandre G. Mitchell. *Comic Picture in Greek Vase-Painting: Humour in the Polis and the Dionysian World, in the Sixth and the Fifth Centuries B.C.* Thesis for D.Phil, School of Archeology, Oxford. Trinity Term, 2002. 107-190 (with most attention focused on dwarfs, depictions of drunkenness, and women), and also in his “Humour in Greek Vase-Painting,” 15-19. Karin Schlott of Heidelberg University is also currently writing a dissertation on Greek caricatures, but no indication of its contents is currently available to me.

composed of interwoven human, animal, and vegetable forms.⁶¹ Clearly, the Italian conception of Roman wall-painting has little to do with Greek vases. Still, the contemporary use of the term comes close to what I am trying to capture about these Greek images: that they are “characterized by comic distortion or exaggeration,”⁶² are as much the product of artistic invention as natural process, and are not merely misshapen, but amusingly misshapen.

With this definition in mind: there are two, closely related types of humorous grotesque in Greek vase-painting: the first depicts the natural grotesqueness of the elderly, the ugly, dwarfs, and so on; the second caricatures “normal” bodies by making them look more like natural grotesques. Most Greek representations of caricatured bodies of either type are related to the theater. These are the images of comic masks and comic costumes, which distorted the body through padding to create large bellies with an appended large phallus.⁶³ Many terracotta figurines of comic actors survive.⁶⁴

Similar distorted features are found on Archaic votive terracotta masks from the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia near Sparta.⁶⁵ (fig. 2.14-2.15) These must have had a cultic

⁶¹ For the origin of the term, see *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*. Florence: Tip. Galileiana, 1863-1923, s.v. grotta, §iv.

⁶² *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. grotesque, 1.b.

⁶³ A recent summary of ancient comic costume is Helene P. Foley, “The Comic Body in Greek Art and Drama,” in Beth Cohen, ed., *Not the Classical Ideal: Athens and the Construction of the Other in Greek Art*. Leiden: Brill, 2000.

⁶⁴ For example, New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum of Art, 13.225.13.

⁶⁵ For example: Sparta, Museum, 1 and 98. For these masks, see Dickens, G. “Terracotta Masks,” in *The Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia at Sparta*, R.M. Dawkins, ed. London: Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies, 1929. pp. 163-186.

meaning, but no literary evidence survives – indeed, even the first identification of the sanctuary as one of Artemis comes only centuries after the creation of the masks. Thus, though they have tempting similarities to the Kabirion and other images, they can add little to our understanding of them.

Hellenistic figurines can also have distorted bodies, but they are sometimes depicted with such skill that it is difficult to tell whether the portraits are sympathetic or humorous.⁶⁶ (fig. 2.16) Some are much more definitely comic.⁶⁷ (fig. 2.17) Evidence for the general comic intent of such grotesque figurines comes from some late antique compilations' discussions of *baskania*, amulets, which are said to be “of human shape but varying slightly from it” and are described as “laughable objects (*geloia*)”; they were hung by blacksmiths in front of their forges “in order to avert envy (*phthonos*).⁶⁸ Similarly, wax figurines with grotesque bodies have been found in Hellenistic Egypt deposited in tombs and accompanied with curse-texts, and so besides its apotropaic role, the grotesque must have had other functions in Greek magic, one that we unfortunately know little about.⁶⁹ In magic, though, it is likely that the grotesque moves away from the

⁶⁶ For example, an ivory figurine of a hunchback, c. 1st c. BCE, from Alexandria. London, British Museum, GR 1814.7-4.277.

⁶⁷ As are the grotesque terracotta figurines Athens, National Museum 10333 and 10334. Smith discusses such figurines: R.R.R. Smith, *Hellenistic Sculpture: A Handbook*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1991. 137.

⁶⁸ The shape of the amulets: Bekker's *Inedita*, 30.5, s.v. *baskanion*. Laughable nature, location, and function: Pollux, *Onomasticon* 7.26.

⁶⁹ Another instance of the grotesque body in magic is recorded in the scapegoat ritual described by the 12th c. AD Byzantine scholar Johannes Tzetzes, basing his testimony in 6th c. BC poet Hipponax of Kolophon: “The pharmakos was in ancient times the expiatory offering as follows. If a misfortune afflicted a city as the result of divine wrath,

comic - that such images, even if “laughable,” are not meant for the type of humorous enjoyment that the other parodic images here discussed were.

Grotesque bodies appear less frequently in Greek painting than in three-dimensional Greek art. Of wall and easel painting we can say little, though Zeuxis was supposed to have died laughing looking at his picture of an old woman, and Pliny also mentions a painting which parodied a queen.⁷⁰ In Attic vase-painting, grotesque bodies are relatively rare, since Attic painters favored ideal body types with calm faces which were hardly ever modified, even to show emotion.⁷¹ Especially rare are grotesque bodies on black-figure vases, such as that of a slave, now in Leiden, though it is difficult to gauge this figure’s scale – perhaps it is merely meant to be an undernourished child?⁷² (fig. 2.18) The greater possibilities for detail in red-figure are helpful in resolving such questions.

whether famine or plague or some other catastrophe, they led out the *ugliest person of all* for sacrifice, to be the expiation and pharmakos of the suffering city. When they had arranged for the sacrifice to take place at a suitable spot, they placed cheese, barley meal and dried figs in the hands of the victim. After beating the victim seven times on the penis with squills and branches of wild fig and of other wild trees, they finally set light to him on a fire consisting of wild branches.” (italics mine) For a discussion of this passage, see Garland, “Mockery of the Deformed and Disabled,” 80-81.

⁷⁰ Zeuxis: Festus, s.v. pictor (see Adolphe Reinach, *Textes grecs et latins relatifs à la peinture ancienne: Recueil Milliet*. Paris: Macula, 1985, no. 211, p. 192). Parody of a queen: Pliny, *Natural History*, 35.100.40.

⁷¹ Boardman has discussed this particularity of Attic vase-painting: John Boardman. *The History of Greek Vases: Potters, Painters and Pictures*. London: Thames and Hudson, 2001. 239-243. He points out that the emotional content of scenes is conveyed not through expression but by “subject matter, conventional gestures and poses,” as well as the use of personifications such as Peitho. His example is the iconography of the suicide of Ajax, which, despite the lack of facial expression, is still pathetic, as it “catches its mood from gesture and pose alone”. 239, 243.

⁷² Leiden, Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, K94.9.15, BA # 768.

In red-figure vases, one relatively frequently-appearing category of the grotesque has to do with the idea of age.⁷³ In particular, a series of vases show Herakles fighting or engaged in discussion with a figure labeled Geras, “Old Age.”⁷⁴ (fig. 2.19 – 2.23) There are no surviving literary sources for this story, which seems to parallel Herakles’ other triumphs over Death.⁷⁵ Geras is shown with an emaciated body, oversized head, curved nose, and sometimes with large or swollen genitalia – in perfect visual accord with the distaste Greeks felt for age and its affect on the body.⁷⁶ Geras’ ugliness is so exaggerated

⁷³ Caricatures based on age have been discussed by Mitchell, *Comic Pictures in Greek Vase-Painting*, 111-117.

⁷⁴ Adolphseck, Schloss Fasanerie, 12, BA # 303575; London, British Museum, E290, BA # 207611; Rome, Mus. Naz. Etrusco di Villa Giulia, 48238, BA # 202567; Paris, Musée du Louvre, G234, BA # 202622. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, 1943.79 may also be a Geras scene. On Berlin, Antikensammlung, 3317, the creature Herakles attacks has wings, and might thus be merely a *ker*, but its aged decrepitude and similarity to the other Geras scenes may also indicate that the painter has merely added wings to his personification. Sutton thinks that this figure is a *ker*, and thus connects the pictures to a satyr play of Aristeeas, from which only a fragment survives: “A fellow-banqueter or reveler or barley-loaf beggar, a/ table-fellow of Hades, having a bottomless belly.” Dana F. Sutton, *The Greek Satyr Play*. Meisenheim am Glan: Hain, 1980. 13. Also on Geras see: J.D. Beazley, “Geras,” *BABesch* 24-26 (1949-51), pp. 18-20; Frank Brommer, “Herakles und Geras,” *AA* (1952), pp. 60-73, 61-64; H.A. Shapiro, *Personifications in Greek Art: The Representation of Abstract Concepts 600-400 BC*. Zurich: Akanthus, 1993. 93; Karl Schefold and Franz Jung, *Die Urkonige, Perseus, Bellerophon, Herakles und Theseus in der klassischen und hellenistischen Kunst*. Munich: Hirmer, 1988. 173-174; Lynn Foxhall and John Salmon, eds., *Thinking Men: Masculinity and its Self-Representation in the Classical Tradition*. London and New York: Routledge, 1998. 53; Mitchell, *Comic Pictures in Greek Vase-Painting*, 112-116.

⁷⁵ Giglioli proposed that the story stemmed from a satyr play or comedy. G.Q. Giglioli, “Una pelike Attica nel Museo di Villa Giulia con Herakles e Geras,” in *Studies in Honor of D.M. Robinson II* (1953), pp. 111-113.

⁷⁶ Garland gives the most detailed description of the physiognomy of Geras: Garland, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 118. He thinks that Geras is not meant merely to be a literal representation of the wasting of old age but also a “metaphor for what advancing age does to human beings inwardly, causing them to be devoured by jealousy at the spectacle of other people enjoying the pleasures from which they themselves are now debarred,”

that it becomes humorously grotesque. Herakles' victory seems inevitable against such a feeble opponent, but Geras' grotesqueness increases the viewer's satisfaction in seeing Herakles rid the world of such a noxious creature. A wish is fulfilled – that the reality of aging could be so easily conquered. At least one other, non-mythological humorous scene features a caricatured, white-haired old man, who pulls meat off of a spit, in company with other, younger, fat men with distorted bodies, who greedily reach out for more food.⁷⁷

Another type of physical condition often subject to caricature was dwarfism.⁷⁸ Aristotle characterized dwarfs as “monsters” because of their abnormal physical development.⁷⁹ As with apes, their similarities and differences from the normal human

supporting this by texts which claim that emaciation was a result of envy: Menander writes that envy causes “endless withering” (fr. 538 Körte), while Horace, *Epistles*, 1.2.57, claims that “the envious man grows thin on the substance of another.” Phthonos, the personification of Envy, was also emaciated (Lucian, *Cal.* 5.13-15). Shapiro thinks that the enlarged phallus of Geras shows his “kinship” to dwarfs, who are said in antiquity to have outsized genitals. H.A. Shapiro, “Notes on Greek Dwarfs,” in *AJA*, 88 (1984), pp. 391-392.391. This connection might also account for Geras' hooked nose, which sometimes appears in later caricatures of dwarfs. 392.

For ancient attitudes towards aging, see Bessie Ellen Richardson, *Old Age among the Ancient Greeks*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1933; and Thomas M. Falkner and Judith de Luce, ed. *Old Age in Greek and Latin Literature*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989.

⁷⁷ The Hague, Scheurleer Museum, 2575, BA # 14921. See Mitchell, *Comic Picture in Greek Vase-Painting*, 116.

⁷⁸ The evidence for ancient humor at the expense of dwarfs is surveyed by Garland, “Mockery of the Deformed and Disabled,” pp. 71-84.

⁷⁹ Aristotle discusses dwarfs in *Somn.* 3.457a23-25; *Hist. an.* 6.24.577b27-28; *Part. An.* 4.10.686b, 3.687b25, 12.695a8; *Gen. an.* 11.710b13.

form were a source of amusement: Athenaeus even describes the Sybarite custom of keeping dwarfs as jesters.⁸⁰

Some examples might show dwarfs sympathetically or merely realistically, such as the several examples of dwarf servants; one by the Kleophrades Painter has a dignified, if thin, body, with an over-sized head.⁸¹ (fig. 2.24) Dwarf satyrs also appear, some with extraordinarily well-observed bodies, while others are merely miniatures.⁸² (fig. 2.25-2.26)

Dwarfs appear most frequently in the guise of pygmies. The battle of the pygmies and cranes were usually (if not always) regarded as a humorous subject – a mock-heroic battle, where the heroics of pygmies parody the ubiquitous battle scenes of Greek vase-painting.⁸³ In black-figure, Attic pygmies are shown as manikins, with normal bodies.⁸⁴ (fig. 2.27) In red-figure, from the early 5th c. BCE, both iconography and schema change. Instead of battle scenes with multiple pygmies, painters now prefer scenes of individual duels, with a single pygmy and one or more cranes. The pygmies are now shown as natural dwarfs, usually of the achondroplastic type, which, because of abnormal

⁸⁰ Athenaeus, 12.518f; in 12.518c, Athenaeus reports that the Sybarites “took delight in Melite puppies and human beings who are less than human.”

⁸¹ Athens, Agora Museum, P2574. BA # 6111.

⁸² Erlangen, University, 1707 and Athens, National Museum, 12139, for example.

⁸³ For Attic representations of pygmies: LIMC, s.v. “Pygmaioi”; Dasen, *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece*; Garland, *The Eye of the Beholder*; Hoffmann, *Sotades*, 28, 165, n. 22; Brian A. Sparkes, “Small World: Pygmies and co.” in *Word and Image in Ancient Greece*, ed. N. Keith Rutter and Brian Sparkes. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000. pp. 79-98.

⁸⁴ For example, on New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 26.49, BA # 300770 and Florence, Museo Archeologico Etrusco, 4209. BA # 300000.

formation of cartilage, results in bodies with large heads, short limbs, and, occasionally, large genitals (this last is fixed feature in the popular imagination, ancient and modern, but in actuality, there is variation). (fig. 2.28-2.34) There are examples of such scenes into the 4th c. BCE, in Kersch-ware.⁸⁵ (fig. 2.35-2.37) The most usual equipment for the Attic pygmies is rather primitive - a club in one hand and a cloak muffling one arm as a shield, though sometimes they carry swords or other hoplite weapons. Attic painters seem to have been occasionally struck by the similarities of the pygmies' outfit and pugnacious tendencies to those of Herakles, and so at times transform the cloak into a lion-skin and the pygmy into a parody of this largest of heroes.⁸⁶ (fig. 2.29) The Greek painter's interest in prominent or deformed pygmy genitals is evident especially on the rhyton in St. Petersburg.⁸⁷ (fig. 2.34) This example in particular would seem to contradict Boardman's assertion that "[t]he appearance of dwarfs... is reported, not laughed at."⁸⁸

The Attic red-figure pygmies, with their usually carefully delineated and undraped bodies, though they are unquestionably modeled after actual dwarfs and not

⁸⁵ In the 5th c. BCE: Athens, Agora Museum, P2574, BA # 6111; Athens, National Museum, 17714, BA # 29108; Paris, Musée du Louvre, TH16, BA # 47067; Brussels, Musées Royaux, R302, BA # 213557; Prague, Museum of Applied Arts, Z260.1K18, BA # 21358; Vatican City, Museo Gregoriano Etrusco Vaticano, 35072, BA # 21359. End of 5th c. BCE: Ruvo, Museo Jatta, 1408, BA # 218716; St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, B1818, BA # 204087. In the 4th c. BCE: St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, P1836.1, BA # 44034; Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, 3221, BA # 11175; St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, P1877.64.

⁸⁶ The resemblance is most striking on Brussels, Musées Royaux, R302, BA # 213557 on which see Dasen, *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece*, 187; Hoffmann, *Sotades*, 28, 165, n. 22; Sparkes, "Small World," 92; Mitchell, *Comic Picture in Greek Vase-Painting*, 122.

⁸⁷ St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, B1818, BA # 204087.

⁸⁸ Boardman, *History of Greek Vases*, 241.

theatrical costuming, are evidence that similar features were found humorous in both: large heads, exaggerated, feature, thin limbs contrasted to large torsos, and oversized genitalia. Their clumsy movements also add to their humor.

Dwarfs also appear on some vases in what seem to be comic scenes: capering and dancing as symposiasts; clumsily practicing at the gym; even trying their luck by courting a pretty ephebe, love-gift in hand.⁸⁹ (fig. 2.38-2.41) A female dwarf shown drinking wine from a large cup is definitely humorous, with her exaggerated lips, pug nose, and violation of female decorum.⁹⁰ (fig. 2.42) Perhaps she is a prostitute, or a prostitute caricatured as a dwarf.

The apparently inherent humor of a dwarfish body meant that many of the remaining caricatured figures in Greek vase-painting appear dwarfish, as if partially transformed into natural dwarfs. The most heavily caricatured figures are also wrinkled and stooped, incorporating the humorously grotesque effects of age.

One type of Attic grotesque, unparalleled in other wares, shows dwarf-like caricatured figures with massively large heads.⁹¹ (fig. 2.43-2.47) One of these figures has

⁸⁹ Dwarfs dancing as symposiasts: Paris, Musée du Louvre, G617, BA # 209513; Yale, University, R. Darlington Stoddart coll., 160, BA # 21361. At the gym: St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, B1621, BA # 215021. Dwarf with ephebe and hare: Paris, Louvre, CA2183, BA # 210078; on this vase, see Dasen, *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece*, 222-223.

⁹⁰ Munich, Antikensammlungen, 8934, BA # 4691.

⁹¹ Dresden, Albertinum, ZV1827, BA # 16395; Ferrara, Museo Nazionale di Spina, T19CVPA, BA # 212583; Vatican City, Museo Gregoriano Etrusco Vaticano, 16552, BA # 211120; Paris, Musée du Louvre, G610, BA # 2720; Athens, National Museum, Acropolis Collection, 1073; Boston (MA), Museum of Fine Arts, 10.216, BA # 200661. Dasen discusses further uses of dwarfs to parody athletics, homosexual courtship, and Dionysiac rites: Dasen, *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece*, 222ff.

sometimes been identified as a caricature of Aesop, since he sits in conversation with a fox, but this can only be a guess.⁹² (fig. 2.43) Another shows a grotesque man defecating while holding his nose.⁹³ (fig. 2.45) On an askos in Paris, a naked man of this grotesque type is paired with a roaring lion; Metzler has suggested that the lion is a symbol of hoplite virtue, routing a sophist parasite, but if this is true, the sophist seems remarkably unconcerned.⁹⁴ (fig. 2.47)

There are also non-theatrical grotesque figures on surviving examples of South Italian vase-painting.⁹⁵ (fig. 2.48-2.50) Not surprisingly, these figures look merely as if they had naturalized the comic costume; they thus have fatter torsos, smaller heads, and longer, more muscled limbs than other Greek grotesque figures.

We must, of course, be careful when using grotesque bodies as signs of humor, since the Greeks also used grotesqueness to indicate fearsomeness, e.g. for harpies and some souls (*ker*).⁹⁶

⁹² Vatican City, Museo Gregoriano Etrusco Vaticano, 16552, BA # 211120. The Aesop identification is discussed in Paul Zanker, "Aesop, between Man and Beast: Ancient Portraits and Illustrations," in *Not the Classical Ideal: Athens and the Construction of the Other in Greek Art*, Beth Cohen, ed. Leiden: Brill, 2000; Paul Zanker, *Die Maske des Sokrates: Das Bild des Intellektuellen in der antiken Kunst*. Munich: C.H. Beck, 1995. 39; Dasen, *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece*. pl. 38.4.

⁹³ Athens, National Museum, Acropolis Collection, 1073.

⁹⁴ Paris, Louvre, G610, BA # 2720. Dieter Metzler, *Porträt und Gesellschaft: über die Entstehung des griechischen Porträts in der Klassik*. Munster: 1971. 101. On this vase, see also Alexandre Mitchell, "Humour in Greek Vase-Painting," 18; Zanker, "Aesop," 32-39.

⁹⁵ Taranto, Ragusa coll., 126; Toledo, Museum of Art, 67.136, BA # 1001533; Basel, Antikenmuseum, Z303.

⁹⁶ Thus, we should not follow Alexandre reading harpies and kers as parodies of death. See Arsène Alexandre, *L'Art du Rire et de la Caricature*. Paris: Quantin, 1892. 11.

Motions

The motions and postures of figures in painted scenes offer subtler cues about humor. For example, artists use different conventions for showing the action of running for comic and for serious images. Mythological characters in Greek visual art have many occasions to run – in races, battle, pursuit of desirable persons or in flight from such pursuit. In the great majority of these scenes, the characters' posture symbolizes rather than actual depicts running. Both feet touch the ground line, with motion shown by a lifted ankle and slightly bent leg. For example, in scenes from an early incident in Helen's life, her abduction by Theseus and Perithoos, even her panicked companions usually have both feet flat along the ground line, and only in a few later examples is Helen herself permitted to throw out a foot in her attempt to save herself.⁹⁷ (fig. 2.52-2.52) This difference in the running postures of male and female characters is common across mythological scenes, with females permitted to pick up some or all of a foot from the ground line and males usually maintaining full contact. This contact is deliberate - the male heroes' static posture shows strength and confidence, for they do not need to exert themselves by running to accomplish their aims. That the women in the scenes lift their feet shows their greater disorder and fear. The only hero who regularly flings out his feet is Achilles, in scenes of his pursuit of Troilos.⁹⁸ (fig. 2.53) Here, though, Achilles is

⁹⁷ Munich, Antikensammlung, 2309, BA # 200157 and Goteborg, Rohsska Museum, 171.62, BA # 202571.

⁹⁸ Achilles with the bounding run chasing Troilos: Basel, Antikenmuseum und Sammlung Ludwig, BS1921.330, BA # 7073; Berkeley (CA), Phoebe Apperson Hearst Mus. of Anthropology, 8.60, BA # 9085; Berlin, Antikensammlung, F1685, BA # 310170; Berlin, Antikensammlung, F1895, BA # 320041; Florence, Museo Archeologico Etrusco, 4020, BA # 215777; Hannover, Kestner Museum, 1965.30, BA # 340472; Leipzig,

chasing someone on horseback, and so the bounding posture marks his speed as greater than usual; similarly, athletes in races on Panathenaic amphora or other vases also often have this posture.⁹⁹

Another group of mythological figures almost always lift up their feet while running or even just standing – the satyrs.¹⁰⁰ These non-heroic males often fling out their legs in pursuit of maenads, for example, on the name vase of the Pan Painter (where the pursuer is Pan himself).¹⁰¹ (fig. 2.54-2.55) Satyrs are notoriously lustful and famously unsuccessful in their erotic pursuits; maenads, especially, often fend them off or outpace

Antikenmuseum d. Universität Leipzig, T49, BA # 102; Lille, Musée de Beaux Arts, SPB11, BA # 306772; London, British Museum, E13, BA # 200935; Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, 330, BA # 11356; Paris, Musée du Louvre, A15, BA # 12382; Paris, Musée du Louvre, G154, BA # 203902; and on the François krater (Florence, Museo Archeologico Etrusco, 4009, BA # 206247).

⁹⁹ For running athletes, see for example: Vatican City, Museo Gregoriano Etrusco Vaticano, 376, BA # 211782; London, British Museum, B609, BA # 30315; Paris, Musée du Louvre, N3163, BA # 303149; New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 56.171.6, BA # 303140.

¹⁰⁰ E.g., Euripides' *Cyclops* contains several comments about the quick feet of satyrs (45, 75), as well as providing an explanation for their quickness by treating satyrs' drinking and dancing as inseparable (131-133, 175).

¹⁰¹ Boston (MA), Museum of Fine Arts, 10.185, BA # 206276. For other examples of satyrs in bounding run after maenads, see: Athens, National Museum, 1237, BA # 211389; Basel, Antikenmuseum und Sammlung Ludwig, BS450, BA # 214768; Bologna, Museo Civico Archeologico, PU351, BA # 213354; Chicago (IL), Art Institute, 05.345, BA # 205306; Compiègne, Musée Vivenel, 1025, BA # 213708; Kassel, Staatliche Museen Kassel, Antikensammlung, T696, BA # 275983; Malibu (CA), The J. Paul Getty Museum, 86.AE.206, BA # 202638; Moscow, Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, 601, BA # 205458; Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, H2948, BA # 218639; New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 22.139.29, BA # 213214; Palermo, Mus. Arch. Regionale, V793, BA # 206105; Paris, Musée du Louvre, G208, BA # 202846; St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, 2262, BA # 15096; Toronto, Royal Ontario Museum, 358, BA # 218421..

them.¹⁰² Thus the bounding run, which in Troilos or race scenes indicates greater than usual speed, becomes a symbol of the satyr's desperate desire. Unlike the calmly striding heroes, the satyr has no confidence that he will achieve his object, and he shows his weakness in the effort that he must make in his attempt.

This clear distinction between comic and serious running styles means that a mythological male who bounds rather than strides in a situation in which, unlike Achilles, he has no real need for speed, is likely comic. Thus, the way in which Menelaus runs in pursuit of Helen on certain vases, moving in a peculiar bounding hop with arms akimbo, probably signals that these scenes are parodic.¹⁰³ (fig. 2.65-2.57) Even direction of the motions of an entire scene is significant, since heroes usually run to the right, while satyrs, as well as the bounding Menelaus, usually run from right to left, as on the Pan Painter vase.¹⁰⁴ I will discuss these scenes with Menelaus, below, in the section on mythological parody.

Subject-Matter

Boardman was the first scholar to attempt an overview of the issue of humor in Greek vase-painting, with a discussion of various possibly categories for this type of

¹⁰² On maenads and satyrs, see François Lissarrague. "The Sexual Life of Satyrs," in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*. Ed. David M. Halperin, John J. Winkler, and Froma I. Zeitlin. Trans. Deborah Lyons. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990. pp. 53-82. 62-63.

¹⁰³ Tarquinia, Museo Nazionale Tarquiniese, RC5291, BA # 204395 and Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, 741, BA # 201909.

¹⁰⁴ Bounding Menelaus running from right to left: Paris, Musée du Louvre, G424, BA # 214486; Tarquinia, Museo Nazionale Tarquiniese, RC5291, BA # 204395; Tübingen, Eberhard-Karls-Univ., Arch. Inst., 67.5806, BA # 206757.

humor: he lists visual puns, figural vases, animals behaving as humans, comic monsters such as the phallos bird, ex-*phylax* vases, and satyrs, both on their own and when intervening in myth scenes.¹⁰⁵ Still, such humorous vases take up only a small proportion of his catalogues of Greek vase-painting, and few other scholars have given them much attention. There are two notable exceptions, which have long been of interest to classicists: ex-*phylax* vases and images of satyrs.

The South Italian ex-*phylax* vases, which illustrate scenes from comic theater, are studied by scholars of ancient drama, since they reveal details of costuming and stage properties and can also help to reconstruct details of missing comedies.¹⁰⁶ (fig. 2.58) Because these vases were discovered early in the history of the modern study of Greek culture, they have had place of pride in the modern conception of ancient comic art: see, for example, their importance place in Champfleury's mid 19th century *Histoire de la Caricature Antique*.¹⁰⁷ There are problems with taking these vases as a model for the visual humor of Greek vase-painting as a whole. The ex-*phylax* vases come late in the history of Greek vase-painting – in the 4th century BCE, while painting on the Greek

¹⁰⁵ Boardman, *History of Greek Vases*, 241.

¹⁰⁶ The first attempt at a comprehensive catalogue of these vases is A.D. Trendall, *Phylax Vases*. London: University of London, Institute of Classical Studies, 1959. The most important recent contribution to their study remains Oliver Taplin, *Comic Angels: And Other Approaches to Greek Drama through Vase-Paintings*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993. The group was originally named “*phylax* vases” from a belief that they represented theatrical performances of local South Italian communities (*phylai*). After convincing arguments of scholars, especially Taplin, that the vases represent subjects from Athenian theater, the vases are usually referred to as so called “*phylax* vases” or ex-*phylax* vases.

¹⁰⁷ Champfleury, *Histoire de la Caricature Antique*. Paris: E. Dentu, 1867. They also enjoy a similar prominence in T. Panofka, “Parodien und Karikaturen auf Eerken der Klassischen Kunst” *Abh* (1851), pp. 1-27.

mainland began in the 8th century and reached its peak in the 6th and 5th centuries BCE. Moreover, the *ex-phylax* vases were made in Greek colonies in South Italy, and thus are products of quite a different cultural atmosphere. We need to look at earlier images which are closer to the mainstream of Greek art to find meaningful comparisons for the vases that are the subject of this dissertation.

Satyrs have also been extensively studied, though few scholars have systematically detailed their behavior in visual imagery.¹⁰⁸ In part, this may be because of the seemingly uncomplicated obviousness of their comic behavior as they masturbate, disport themselves with phallos-birds, carry objects with their phalloi, and violate animals and other objects, even amphorae.¹⁰⁹ (fig. 2.59) Satyrs also parody everyday life,

¹⁰⁸ Recent surveys of satyrs in vase-painting are those of Cornelia Isler-Kerényi, *Civilizing Violence: Satyrs on 6th-century Greek Vases*. Trans. Eric Charles de Sena. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004; and G. M. Hedreen, *Silens in Attic Black-figure Vase-Painting: Myth and Performance*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992. Lissarrague has written extensively on the meaning of satyrs on vases: François Lissarrague, "De la sexualité des satyres," *Métis* 2 (1987), pp. 63-79, reprinted as "The Sexual Life of Satyrs," in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*. Ed. David M. Halperin, John J. Winkler, and Froma I. Zeitlin. Trans. Deborah Lyons. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990. pp. 53-82; "Why Satyrs are Good to Represent," in *Nothing to Do With Dionysos? Athenian Drama in its Social Context*. Ed. John J. Winkler and Froma I. Zeitlin. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990. pp. 228-236; "On the Wildness of Satyrs," in *Masks of Dionysus*. Ed. T. H. Carpenter and Christopher A. Faraone. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993. pp. 207-220; Lissarrague, "Satyres, Sérieux S'Abstenir." A recent discussion of the humor of satyrs is that of Mitchell, *Comic Picture in Greek Vase-Painting*, 191-256.

¹⁰⁹ Masturbating: New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 26.49, BA # 300770; satyrs with phallos-birds: Boston (MA), Museum of Fine Arts, 08.31c, BA # 383; Brussels, Musées Royaux, A723, BA # 203253; phallus used to carry objects: Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, 509, BA # 200618; Munich, Antikensammlungen, 1522, BA # 320260; Rome, Mus. Naz. Etrusco di Villa Giulia, 3550, BA # 302196; Paris, Cabinet des Médailles 343, BA # 302647; having sex with an animal: London, British Museum, 1952.2-3.1, BA # 306159; E736, BA # 6017; and B446, BA # 330714; Munich, Antikensammlung, 1952, BA # 31981; Boston (MA), Museum of Fine Arts, 01.17, BA # 301662; with an amphora: Palermo, Museo Archeologico, V 651, BA # 200431; London, British Museum,

as on a volute krater in Munich, on one side of which athletes exercise, while on the reverse, satyrs parody the same positions, including a satyr trainer who holds a large phallus instead of a cane.¹¹⁰ Other vases use satyrs in place of citizens, showing them performing such cultivated activities as wooing youths and thus commenting on the desires underlying such restrained forms.¹¹¹ Lissarrague has offered the most sustained analysis of such pictures, positing that their characteristic elements are a display of the shameful parts of the body and inversions of object, roles, and especially of polite Greek manners.¹¹² Lissarrague posits that these images of satyrs act as reflections of the drinkers who use the vessels on which satyrs are painted at *symposia*. These drinkers could have used the images of satyrs to reflect on their own sexuality and desires, exploring them within the safety of a fictional world. These images would ultimately have reinforced the normal rules and values of Greek society by showing the bestiality of rule-breakers.¹¹³ This is so far the most convincing interpretation of satyrs on vases, though it does not capture their vibrancy - the painters seem to have enjoyed devising satyr situations too much for a merely moralizing motivation.

E35, BA # 200482. These examples are all discussed in Lissarrague, "Sexual Life of Satyrs."

¹¹⁰ Munich, Antikensammlungen, J542, BA # 202099.

¹¹¹ St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, ST1721, BA # 206009.

¹¹² Lissarrague, "Satyres, Sérieux S'Abstenir," 113-114.

¹¹³ Lissarrague, "Why Satyrs Are Good to Represent," 235. For the fullest explication of this theory, see François Lissarrague, *Un flot d'images: une esthétique du banquet grec*. Paris: A. Biro, 1987. See also the English translation by Andrew Szegedy-Maszak: *The Aesthetics of the Greek banquet: Images of Wine and Ritual*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990.

Images of satyrs do provide a basis for comparison of strategies of visual humor, but they cannot explain all humorous imagery on Greek vases. The main difficulty lies in the different behaviors of satyrs, gods, and heroes. On Kabirion and Anthesteria vases, gods and heroes are shown up to some of the same tricks as satyrs. Satyrs, as the “Other,” normally break social rules. Even in non-comic literary sources, satyrs behave badly. Gods and heroes, on the other hand, are described with respect outside of comic literature, and are not usually shown misbehaving in surviving ancient visual arts. Why, then, do they behave like satyrs on these vases?

Satyrs also appear on vases which seem to illustrate scenes from satyr plays.¹¹⁴ Like the *ex-phylax* vases, these scenes have been mainly studied for what they reveal of theater, with little interest in why Greeks would have wanted to see these scenes excerpted and put on vases. Perhaps they were a type of souvenir, or perhaps they are better explained along the lines of the non-dramatic satyr images; in either case, they, too, leave questions to be answered about Greek visual humor.

Several recent scholars have studied new categories of humorous vases. Lissarrague and Osborne have devoted attention to symposium vases that, like satyr

¹¹⁴ On satyr plays, see Sutton, *The Greek Satyr Play*; David Konstan, “An Anthropology of Euripides’ *Kyklops*,” in *Nothing to do with Dionysos? Athenian Drama in Its Social Context*. Ed. John J. Winkler and Froma I. Zeitlin. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990. pp. 207-227; Pierre Voelke, *Un Théâtre de la Marge: Aspects figuratifs et configurationnelles du drame satyrique dans l’Athènes classique*. Bari: Levante, 2001. pp. 329-339; Mark Griffin, “Slaves of Dionysos: Satyrs, Audience, and the Ends of the Oresteia,” *CA* 21.2 (2002), pp. 195-258. For a catalogue (the pertinence of many of whose entries are disputed) of satyr play scene on vases, see Frank Brommer, *Satyrspiele: Bilder griechischer Vasen*. Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1944; and also on these scenes, Lissarrague, “Why Satyrs Are Good to Represent.”

vases, reflect and comment on the drinker's activity.¹¹⁵ One of Osborne's examples is a Geometric oinochoe decorated with a shipwreck, which he interprets as "a party jug celebrating the ability to survive the waves of drunkenness which it dispenses."¹¹⁶ Then there are also many images of symposiasts who have not survived the storm, and who stumble, vomit, and urinate in any convenient receptacle.¹¹⁷ (fig. 2.60)

The idea that Greek vases tend to reflect their users' activities is important, but it is not at first obvious how this idea applies to the images parodying gods and heroes – here, at least, the reflection is not so straight-forward as on humorous symposium vases. Moreover, these parody images remind us that humorous imagery occurred outside of the symposium – whereas Osborne, focusing on symposium vases, argues that the symposium was the prime location for visual humor.¹¹⁸

Another category of humorous imagery lately of interest to scholars is that of joking scenes of everyday life. Shapiro, for example, has investigated the tendency

¹¹⁵ Osborne, *Archaic and Classical Greek Art*. This book even has an entry for "humour" in the index – a sign of the growing interest in this aspect of Greek art. On vases for the symposium, see also Richard T. Neer, *Style and Politics in Athenian Vase-Painting: The Craft of Democracy, c. 530-460 B.C.E.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002.

¹¹⁶ Munich, Antikensammlungen, 8696. Osborne, *Archaic and Classical Greek Art*, 36-37.

¹¹⁷ Malibu (CA), The J. Paul Getty Museum, 86.AE.199, BA # 195. Mitchell discusses these scenes, and connects the "sudden rash" of scenes of vomiting, defecating, and urinating to Shafter's theory that, from ca. 530 to 480, common citizens adopted and made vulgar the ritual of the previously aristocratic symposium. Mitchell, *Comic Pictures in Greek Vase-Painting*, 132-137. Alfred Shafter, *Unterhaltung beim griechischen Symposion: Darbietungen, Spiele und Wettkämpfe von homerischer bis in spätklassische Zeit*. Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1997. 56-57.

¹¹⁸ Osborne, *Archaic and Classical Greek Art*, 41.

towards comic scenes on the archaic pelike. On one, an oil-shop proprietor has a bit of inscribed dialogue - “It’s full, it’s already spilling over!” – evidently in reply to a complaining customer.¹¹⁹ (fig. 2.61) On another, a shopkeeper praises his wares to a female customer, saying “*kalon ei*” – she, disagreeing, holds her nose. On the reverse two dogs fight in an oil shop – they are not so picky about the quality of the wares they are trying to steal.¹²⁰ (fig. 2.62) Shapiro notes that pelikes often feature similar small proprietors or craftsmen, and proposes that the pelikes were made for an audience of these *banausoi*, proud of their work – though this does not explain the humorous note often found in these scenes.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Rome, Vatican Museums, 413, BA # 31764. H. Alan Shapiro, “Correlating Shape and Subject: The Case of the Archaic Pelike,” in *Athenian Potters and Painters*. Ed. John H. Oakley, William D.E. Coulson, and Olga Palagia. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1997. pp. 63-70.

¹²⁰ Florence, Museo Archeologico, 72732, BA # 9458. See Mitchell, *Comic Pictures in Greek Vase-Painting*, 155-157.

¹²¹ There are about 100 surviving examples of the archaic pelike; Shapiro comments that many “have a slightly crude sense of humor about them,” and points out as examples a pelike with “two out-of-shape and absurdly posturing pugilists” (New York, Metropolitan Museum, 49.11.1, BA # 302864) and another with “komasts and flute-players in various ungainly postures,” (Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, GR 51.1937) as well as commenting on the one pelike featuring a symposium scene that “the paunchy symposiasts look distinctly non-aristocratic” (Bonn, Kunsthistorisches Museum, 155). H. Alan Shapiro, “Correlating Shape and Subject: The Case of the Archaic Pelike,” in *Athenian Potters and Painters, The Conference Proceedings*, ed. John Oakley, William Coulson, and Olga Palagia. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1994. pp. 63-70. Unsurprisingly, the majority of pelike with mythological scenes are Dionysiac (34 examples). von Bothmer has also pointed out humorous pelike scenes. One, of the capture of Silenus, is “concentrated on the tense moment preceding the capture and its inherent humor for the spectator: Silenos eager and unsuspecting, the hunters alert and confident.” von Bothmer calls the reverse of this vase, which shows two boxers exercising with the accompaniment of a flute-player, “at least as original and certainly as humorous,” since it is “a superb parody of the attitudes struck by athletes.” Thus its *kalos* inscriptions (reading “this boy truly is beautiful”) become somewhat of “a backhanded compliment.” D. von Bothmer, “Attic Black-Figured Pelikai,” *JHS*, 71, 1951, 40-47. 41.

Another recent study of humorous everyday scenes is that of Mitchell; he calls such scenes “situation comedy,” and compares mortal pratfalls, such as images of cats stealing meat from butchers, to humorous myth, such as images of Eurystheus hiding from the boar in a pithos.¹²² Like Shapiro, Mitchell is able to offer little explanation for these scenes; in truth, they should probably be understood, common-sensically, as products of the same urge as leads modern man to create and cherish self-parodies. They may be the closest Greek visual humor approaches ours. They thus demonstrate that vases were a medium for humor, but cannot explain ritual visual humor.

Other vases made jokes about current political events, such as the famous Eurymedon oinochoe.¹²³ (fig. 2.63) On one side, the vase shows a man in a chlamys, holding his erect penis as if it were a sword; on the other, a man in oriental costume leans forward, displaying his face frontally in a manner that the Greek vase painter often uses to indicate terror. Between them runs an inscription, “*eurymedon eimi kuba... hesteka*.” Schauenburg restored the fragmentary word as *kubade*, which means that the declaration is to the effect that “My name is Eurymedon. I stand bent forward.” Schauenburg thought the oriental figure a Persian, named after the battle at the Eurymedon, with the Greek sodomist’s actions symbolizing the Greek victory there in bit of jocular propaganda.

¹²² Cat: Munich, Antikensammlungen, 2347. Mitchell, “Humour in Greek Vase-Painting,” 10-15.

¹²³ Hamburg, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, 1981.173. On this vase, see Karl Schauenburg, “□□□□□□□□ □□□□,” *AM* 90 (1975), pp. 97-121; G. Ferrari Pinney, “For the Heroes are at Hand,” *JHS*, 104 (1984), pp. 181-183 (making an argument for interpreting the humor of the vase as directed against Greeks, not Persians); Keith Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978. 105.

Other scenes, though clearly comical, are so ambiguous that we cannot be certain if they are meant as representations of everyday pratfalls, parodies, or scenes from comic mythology or theater; for example, several scenes of men stealing honey from bees who vigorously attack them, favoring the genitals.¹²⁴ (fig. 2.64)

Subject Matter: Mythological Parodies

Especially interesting for their comparability to the scenes on the vases discussed in this dissertation are the clearer parodies of myth that appear on Greek vases. Unfortunately, though the parody of myth in Greek literature has been extensively studied, there has so far been little attention to the visual parody of the Greeks. It existed, even in the finer arts: Pliny, for example, described a burlesque picture by Ctesilochus of Zeus giving birth to Dionysos.¹²⁵

The mythological parodies on vases are of several different types. Some play up the already comic aspects of deities, such as the Pan Painter's name vase, which Osborne has argued shows the comic justice of a goatherd about to be overcome by a goatish creature, the more-than-usually aroused Pan.¹²⁶ (fig. 2.54) And, of course, there are examples of characters parodied by changes in body type. For example, an askos, now in Hamburg, features Pegasos on one side and a dwarf-like figure on the other, holding a rock in one hand and a bow in the other.¹²⁷ (fig. 2.65) This is Bellerophon, caricatured as a dwarf.

¹²⁴ London, British Museum, B177, BA # 4330 and Basel, Antikenmuseum und Sammlung Ludwig, Z364, BA # 340559.

¹²⁵ Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, 35.40: "Ctesilochus, a pupil of Apelles, was famous for a burlesque picture of his, representing Jupiter in labour with Bacchus, with a *mitra* on his head, and crying like a woman in the midst of the goddesses, who are acting as midwives."

¹²⁶ Boston (MA), Museum of Fine Arts, 10.185, BA # 206276. Osborne, *Archaic and Classical Greek Art*, 152-154.

¹²⁷ Hamburg, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, 1984.457, BA # 46028. The Beazley Archive describes this figure as a "dwarf or pygmy," and *LIMC* as a satyr: BA: 46028; *LIMC*, s.v. "Pegasos," 18.

Satyrs also parody myth in images where they take the place of the main characters in mythological stories. (These images thus cannot be representations of satyr plays, since on stage, satyrs formed only the chorus, while the gods and heroes were dressed in the same costumes as they wore for Tragedy.) On a krater by the Orchard Painter, a satyr takes the role of Jason, and, urged on by Dionysos, fights the Drakon for the Golden Fleece.¹²⁸ (fig. 2.66) A satyr Perseus holding the head of Medusa bounds across oceans on a lekythos now in Paris.¹²⁹ (fig. 2.67)

Example: The Recovery of Helen

Other mythological parodies are more difficult to identify, since they do not feature satyrs. One such parody type, I propose, is a new version of the scene of Menelaos' encounter with Helen at Troy which appears in the 5th century B.C.E.¹³⁰ (fig. 2.68-2.69) These scenes are especially valuable for understanding the signs of humor in Greek art because Helen was regarded by some Greeks as a tragic and by other Greeks as a comic figure. Thus, individual authors and painters had to choose and specify their attitude towards her. An analysis of the visual and iconographical cues painters used to indicate their choice offer indications of the ways in which painters could signal that a scene in general was either comic or serious. Thus, these scenes are worth examining at some length.

¹²⁸ Bologna, Museo Civico Archeologico, 190, BA # 205909.

¹²⁹ Paris, Musée du Louvre CA 1728, BA # 207941.

¹³⁰ Toledo (OH), Museum of Art, 67.154, BA # 695 and Tübingen, Eberhard-Karls-Univ., Arch. Inst., 67.5806, BA # 206757.

The story of Menelaos' recovery of Helen was possibly told in the lost *Ilioupersis* of Arctinus, but the remains are so fragmentary that we can only say that he encountered her in anger but then forgave her because of her beauty and possibly because of the intervention of Aphrodite. The *Little Iliad* of Lesches also described an angry Menelaos, threatening Helen with a sword, but in this version, too, he was overcome by her beauty and pardoned her.¹³¹ The remains of Ibycus' *Ilioupersis* give the additional detail that Helen was said to have taken refuge in a temple of Aphrodite.¹³² Later dramas add more details, perhaps original but perhaps also references to now-lost details of the epic tradition. Most notably, Euripides describes how Menelaos let his sword drop when he saw Helen's bared breast.¹³³ Though the sources generally agree that Menelaos took Helen back from Troy, they vary widely in their opinions about the wisdom of his action. For example, some epic poetry presents Helen as a rape victim or an unwilling tool of Aphrodite, allowing Menelaos to reclaim and live happily with his relatively blameless wife.¹³⁴ The opinions of the lyric poets vary even more widely than those of the epic

¹³¹ Leches fr. 17, Allen.

¹³² Page, *PMG* frg. 296.

¹³³ *Andr.*, 627-31.

¹³⁴ Helen as a rape victim: *Il.* 2.356; controlled by Aphrodite: 3.390-420. Helen and Menelaos after Troy: *Od.*, 4.1ff For the blameless Helen of epic, see M.R. Lefkowitz, *Women in Greek Myth*. London: Duckworth, 1986. For the idea of Homer's awareness of an alternate version, see Margaret Graver, "Dog-Helen and Homeric Insult," *Classical Antiquity*, 14.1 (1995). pp. 41-61. esp. 54. Graver arrives at this conclusion from the insults Helen heaps on herself Helen calls herself in the *Iliad*: "dog" (6.344 and 355), "dog-face" (3.180), "hateful" (3.404), "many shames and reproaches are upon me" (3.242). Graver concludes that to call someone a dog in this context has a meaning of greediness in the domains of material goods, fighting, sexuality, or speech. See also Mihoko Suzuki. *Metamorphoses of Helen: Authority, Difference, and the Epic*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989.

poets: Stesichorus defended Helen by claiming that not she, but an image of her, went to Troy, while Alcaeus presents a culpable Helen, calling her “out of her wits.”¹³⁵ The tragedy poets take an even more negative view of Helen’s culpability, calling her “ship-wrecker, man-destroyer, city-sacker,” “a cursed distress,” and “a thing of hatred for the Greeks.”¹³⁶ Such opinions about Helen’s behavior and role in the war influenced the tragedians’ view of her recovery; thus, in his *Trojan Women*, Euripides bemoans the weakness of Menelaos for forgiving Helen and tells how he ordered his servants to drag her away from the altar by her hair.¹³⁷

There were divided attitudes about Helen not only within serious forms of literature but also between serious and comic literature. Helen was a popular character in comedy, judging from the surviving titles of some Old Comedy plays (the *Menelaos* of Plato and the *Helen* of Philyllius), while Sophocles wrote a satyr play called “The Wedding of Helen.”¹³⁸ Cratinus’ *Dionysalexander* featured Dionysos kidnapping Helen instead of Paris.¹³⁹ Several incidental references in surviving comedies on other subjects

¹³⁵ On Stesichorus’ attitude, see Pl. *Phaedrus* 243a. See discussion in N. Austin, *Helen of Troy and her Shameless Phantom*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994. Alcaeus, LP 283. For other early anti-Helen sentiments, see Hesiod, MW 176 and *Cypria*, fr. 1,7 Allen. For Helen in lyric and tragedy, see Helene Homeyer, *Die Spartanische Helena und der Trojanische Krieg*. Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1977.

¹³⁶ Aeschylus *Ag.* 689-90; Euripides *Hec.* 949; *IT* 525. For other instances of Helen blamed for her actions in tragedy, see Aeschylus *Ag.* 1455-61; Euripides *Andr.* 103; *Hec.* 943-51; *IT* 440-46; *IA* 1315-16; *Rh.* 906-14; *Tr.* 772-73.

¹³⁷ *Troj.*, 1036-39 and 880-82.

¹³⁸ *TrGF* IV F 181-184.

¹³⁹ *POxy* 4.663; see discussion in Dana F. Sutton. *The Greek Satyr Play. Beiträge zue Klassischen Philologie*. Heft 90. Meisenheim am Glan: Anton Hain, 1980. 136.

show that jokes about the recovery of Helen were possible whenever the events of the Trojan war or the power of women over men were under discussion – thus, the chorus of Euripides’ satyr play *Cyclops* inquires of Odysseus whether the Trojan heroes gang-raped Helen after the sack of Troy.¹⁴⁰ In Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata*, when heroine encourages her fellow conspirators to tempt their husbands by wearing transparent dresses, Lampito remarks that this will be just like the story of Menelaos and Helen, since he changed his mind about killing her when he saw her bared breast.¹⁴¹ There is also a story in Athenaeus about “a certain devotee of Epicurus,” who, “in the company of diners, when an eel was served, cried: ‘Here comes the Helen of all feasts; I, therefore, shall be Paris,’” then snatching and eating it without sharing with anyone else.¹⁴²

While the disputes in the serious literature about Helen center around whether or not she was culpable of willingly leaving Menelaos for Paris, the comic tradition seems not to have displayed too much concern about her morals, rather focusing both on her abduction by Paris and her recovery by Menelaos, using both as occasions for the display of her comically exaggerated desirability.

On Attic vases, recovery scenes are shown with several different iconographies, two of which appear in black-figure vases and are continued into red-figure, while the third appears only in red-figure.¹⁴³ By far the most popular arrangement in black-figure

¹⁴⁰ *Cyc.* 179-86 and

¹⁴¹ *Lys.*, 155-56.

¹⁴² Athenaeus, 298b.

vases is to show Helen being led by the hand by Menelaos, the couple flanked by fellow walkers or onlookers, either warriors or women. In other instances, Menelaos still holds or touches Helen, but has turned to face her; sometimes, they are surrounded by the same sort of onlookers, but on a few vases they are shown thus in the middle of the sack of Troy, making this a representation of their first confrontation, while the other schema seems to show him leading her away from Troy.¹⁴⁴ (fig. 2.70). This schema, though less common, may be the earliest, since it is used on a relief pithos from Mykonos.¹⁴⁵ The painters mark their relation as a married couple by showing Menelaos holding her by the hand or wrist as bridegrooms do brides or having Helen unveil herself, a common bridal gesture.¹⁴⁶ The two black-figure schemata have in common a calm presentation of both actors – Helen displays no fear and Menelaos no desire or anger.

¹⁴³ The scene of her recovery by her Menelaos from Troy is Helen's most frequent appearance of Helen in Greek vase-painting. Lilly Kahil, LIMC (1988), s.v. "Helene," 498-563.

¹⁴⁴ Berlin, Antikensammlung, F2205, BA # 204102.

¹⁴⁵ Relief pithos with scenes from Troy, from Mykonos, c. 675 BCE. Mykonos Museum, no inv. no.

¹⁴⁶ Helen holds her veil in a bridal gesture on the majority of vases with this iconography, for example: Berlin, Antikensammlung, F1685, BA # 310170; Berlin, Antikensammlung, F1842, BA # 320121; London, British Museum, B243, BA # 320294, BA # 320294; London, British Museum, B244, BA # 320085; New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 44.11.1, BA # 13330; New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 69.233.1, BA # 320086. On the use of bridal imagery in these and other mythological scenes, see J.H. Oakley, "Nuptial Nuances: Wedding Images in Non-Wedding Scenes of Myth," in *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, ed. E.D. Reeder. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1995. pp. 63-73. Oakley argues that this gesture is "a clear allusion to the fact that they will once again live together happily married." 65-66. On the Greek wedding in general, see J.H. Oakley and R.H. Sinos. *The Wedding in Ancient Athens*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993. For wedding scenes with the groom leading the bride by the wrist, see for example: Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, 1966.888, BA # 34; Berlin, Antikensammlung, 3373, BA # 430; Tübingen, Eberhard-Karls-Univ., Arch. Inst., 1219,

A common feature of these black-figure scenes is their tendency to place the recovery scene within the context of Troy. Sometimes this is done by placing Menelaos and Helen as one of several figural groups in larger *Ilioupersis* scenes; these are of particular interest for the comparison they allow between the calm married couple and the excitement and panic of the rapist Ajax and his virgin victim Cassandra.¹⁴⁷ Other vases place appropriately martial or Trojan scenes on the reverse of vases with the recovery scene.¹⁴⁸ Other reverse scenes feature other scenes of myth, and of the many examples of

BA # 11634; Athens, National Museum, 15214, BA # 200081; Florence, Museo Archeologico Etrusco, 4025, BA # 205957; Paris, Musée du Louvre, N3408, BA # 211247; London, British Museum, D11, BA # 211904; Brussels, Musées Royaux, A3547, BA # 216669. The iconographies of the wedding and the recovery of Helen are so close that when there are no other elements to specify the scene they can sometimes not be told apart. Several vases pair a recovery scene with a scene of a wedding procession on the reverse: Los Angeles (CA), County Museum, M77.48.1, BA # 350444 and Vatican City, Museo Gregoriano Etrusco Vaticano, 358, BA # 310375.

¹⁴⁷ San Simeon (CA), Hearst Historical State Monument, 5476, BA # 7865 and Berlin, Antikensammlung, F1685, BA # 310170. Stansbury-O'Donnell has commented on the juxtaposition in the Berlin amphora of these two couples, though he perhaps misreads Helen's bridal gesture as "wholly inappropriate to a scene of great slaughter." Mark Stansbury-O'Donnell, *Pictorial Narrative in Ancient Greek Art*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999. 166.

¹⁴⁸ Warriors fighting: Armonk (NY), Mrs. A. Pinney, BA # 320120 (Beazley, J.D., *Attic Black-Figure Vase-Painters* (Oxford, 1956), 273.109, 691); Berlin, Antikensammlung, F1842, BA # 320121; Los Angeles (CA), County Museum, A5933.50.7, BA # 320119; Manchester, School of Art, AA45, BA # 310372; New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 44.11.1, BA # 13330; London, Dr. Bowring, no inv. no., BA # 23969. Warriors not fighting: Compiègne, Musée Vivenel, 983, BA # 320113 (warrior in a chariot); Florence, Museo Archeologico Etrusco, 1807, BA # 23038 (horsemen and warriors); London, British Museum, B243, BA # 320294 (arming scene). Trojan-related myth: Munich, Antikensammlungen, J1269, BA # 320236 and Richmond (VA), Museum of Fine Arts, 7.9, BA # 320089 (Judgment of Paris); Palermo, Mus. Arch. Regionale, 2884, BA # 20240 (horse race – funeral games?); Vatican City, Museo Gregoriano Etrusco Vaticano, 350, BA # 310352 (Eos mourning Memnon).

this type of black-figure recovery scene, only a very few are associated with Dionysos or mortal celebrations.¹⁴⁹

Both black-figure schema continue into red-figure, where they appear throughout the fifth century.¹⁵⁰ (fig. 2.71) The schema of leading by the hand remains much the same,¹⁵¹ but the scene of their confrontation becomes more popular and elaborate.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Baltimore (MD), Walters Art Gallery, 48.15, BA # 310359 (Herakles, Athena, and Hermes); Bremen, Zimmermann, BA # 19208 (Steinhart, M., Topferkunst und Meisterzeichnung, Attische Wein- und Olgefasse aus der Sammlung Zimmermann (Mainz, 1996), COLOUR PLATE 2, 38-41, NO.5) Herakles and Apollo fighting for the Tripod; Edinburgh, National Museums of Scotland, 1881.44.27, BA # 301604 (Herakles and Kerberos); London, British Museum, B244, BA # 320085 (birth of Athena); New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 69.233.1, BA # 320086 (Centauromachy); San Simeon (CA), Hearst Historical State Monument, 5476, BA # 7865 (Dioskouroi); St. Lucia, University of Queensland, 85.2740, BA # 23188 (Theseus and the Minotaur); Tarquinia, Museo Nazionale Tarquiniese, 1748, BA # 301544 (Herakles and Hydra); Taranto, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, 20138, BA # 21790 (Gigantomachy). Other scenes: Goteborg, Rohsska Mus, 66.58, BA # 14719 (vines, women (maenads?) with a panther and krotala); Munich, Antikensammlungen, J75, BA # 310434 (Dionysos and entourage); Vatican City, Museo Gregoriano Etrusco Vaticano, 358, BA # 310375 (wedded pair in a chariot attended by Dionysos); San Simeon (CA), Hearst Corporation, 9511, BA # 310321 (komos).

¹⁵⁰ Berlin, Antikensammlung, 1970.9, BA # 318.

¹⁵¹ Examples: Athens, Ceramicus, 1663, BA # 2257; Berlin, Antikensammlung, F2205, BA # 204102; Boston (MA), Museum of Fine Arts, 13.190, BA # 201000; Malibu (CA), The J. Paul Getty Museum, 80.AE.154, BA # 16776; Munich, Antikensammlungen, J283, BA # 203039; Odessa, Museum of Western and Eastern Art, 21972, BA # 200577; Tarquinia, Museo Nazionale Tarquiniese, RC2460, BA # 202459. On the fragment in Odessa, both figures are named.

¹⁵² Alpine (NJ), S. Tray (*LIMC*, s.v. "Helene" no. 238 BIS (A, B)); Berlin, Antikensammlung, 1970.9, BA # 318; Bologna, Museo Civico Archeologico, 269, BA # 206936; Boston (MA), Museum of Fine Arts, 13.186, BA # 204681; London, British Museum, E161, BA # 202723; Malibu (CA), The J. Paul Getty Museum, 76.AE.44, BA # 41146; Milan, Civico Museo Archeologico, no inv. no., BA # 206057 (Beazley, J.D., *Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters*, 2nd edition (Oxford, 1963), 534.1); Naples, Hamilton, BA # 207527 (Beazley, J.D., *Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters*, 2nd edition (Oxford, 1963), 1603); New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 41.162.20, BA # 205597; Paris, Musée

Menelaos runs in long strides towards Helen, keeping his front foot flat along the ground line, drawing his sword or already holding it at the ready.¹⁵³ With his other hand he usually touches Helen, though on some vases she is a few paces ahead of him. Her lower body is turned away from him, and she seems to be moving forward, though her feet, too, remain close to the ground line.¹⁵⁴ Her head and upper body usually are turned towards him; with one hand she pulls at her veil in the bridal gesture while with the other she usually reaches towards him to plead for mercy. As with the black-figure examples, some red-figure vases place the couple within a larger *Ilioupersis* scene,¹⁵⁵ while others pair the recovery scene with warriors or Trojan myth.¹⁵⁶ Again, only a very few pair the scene with other types of more playful scenes.¹⁵⁷

du Louvre, G3, BA # 200435; Princeton (NJ), University Art Museum, 1990.20A-B, BA # 28191; Rome, Market, BA # 211610 (Beazley, J.D., *Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters*, 2nd edition (Oxford, 1963), 883.46); Rome, Mus. Naz. Etrusco di Villa Giulia, 121110, BA # 13363.

¹⁵³ On the importance of running in scenes of erotic pursuit, see Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, "A Series of Erotic Pursuits: Images and Meanings," in *JHS*, 107 (1987). pp. 131-153. 136-137.

¹⁵⁴ For commentary on the "fleeing woman" iconographical schema, see Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, "A Series of Erotic Pursuits: Images and Meanings," in *JHS*, 107 (1987). pp. 131-153. 137 and 137 n. 36. Of particular interest is her citation of Munich 2720, a pyxis with a wedding scene in which a woman, presumably the bride, is shown fleeing. Sourvinou-Inwood argues that this figures is either symbolic of a conception of wedding-as-abduction or an actual representation of a mock-abduction rite.

¹⁵⁵ Malibu (CA), The J. Paul Getty Museum, 80.AE.154, BA # 16776; Rome, Mus. Naz. Etrusco di Villa Giulia, 121110, BA # 13363.

¹⁵⁶ Warriors: Berlin, Antikensammlung, 1970.9, BA # 318; Bologna, Museo Civico Archeologico, 269, BA # 206936; New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 41.162.20, BA # 205597. Other Trojan myth: Boston (MA), Museum of Fine Arts, 13.186, BA # 204681 (Helen abducted by Paris); Paris, Musée du Louvre, G3, BA # 200435 (Chiron and Achilles).

A new schema, unparalleled in black-figure, was introduced during the 5th century B.C.E. On these vases, Menelaos runs by lifting one or both feet completely off the ground.¹⁵⁸ (fig. 2.72-2.73) He is also often shown dropping his sword from his backwards-flung hand.¹⁵⁹ Helen sometimes lifts her feet, too; in general, she is shown running faster, with a greater lead on Menelaos, than in other vase schema. Her clothing is sometimes in disarray, allowing for a view of her legs and shoulders. The similarity of the jerky, bounding run of the satyr to that of Menelaos is unmistakable. Menelaos, then, runs in these scenes unlike a hero. His flinging away his sword thus also appears more sharply as an equally unheroic gesture, more like the careless cowardice of one who flees from battle than a gesture of forgiveness.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ A recovery scene is paired with scenes of Zeus pursuing a nymph and Eos chasing Tithonos in a cup, formerly Rome, Market, BA # 211610 (Beazley, J.D., *Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters*, 2nd edition (Oxford, 1963), 883.46). Aside from this, see London, British Museum, E161, BA # 202723 (symposium); Tarquinia, Museo Nazionale Tarquiniese, RC2460, BA # 202459 (komos).

¹⁵⁸ The schema appears on: Athens, National Museum, 14983, BA # 213443; Ferrara, Museo Nazionale di Spina, T577, BA # 206130; London, British Museum, E294, BA # 207526; Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, 126053, BA # 201896; Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, H3115, BA # 206047; Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, H3129, BA # 215791; Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, 1965.123, BA # 201973; Paris, Musée du Louvre, G424, BA # 214486; Rome, Museo Torlonia, no inv. no., BA # 23625; St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, 4524, BA # 215792; Tarquinia, Museo Nazionale Tarquiniese, RC5291, BA # 204395; Toledo (OH), Museum of Art, 67.154, BA # 695; Tübingen, Eberhard-Karls-Univ., Arch. Inst., 67.5806, BA # 206757; Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, 741, BA # 201909.

¹⁵⁹ See, for example: Athens, National Museum, 14983, BA # 213443; Ferrara, Museo Nazionale di Spina, T577, BA # 206130; Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, 126053, BA # 201896; Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, H3129, BA # 215791; Rome, Museo Torlonia, no inv. n. BA # 23625; St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, 4524, BA # 215792; Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, 1965.123, BA # 201973; London, British Museum, E263, BA # 206878; Toledo (OH), Museum of Art, 67.154, BA # 695.

Aphrodite, Peitho (“Persuasion”), or Eros sometimes appear as spectators and participants in this type of scene. In the other schema, Menelaos is joined only by Aphrodite, and that only in one surviving instance.¹⁶¹ (fig. 2.74) These appearances of Aphrodite, Peitho, and Eros have attracted scholarly attention. They are usually explained as a product of new interests in depictions of emotions, with painters seeking to clarify the inner states of his characters.¹⁶² These scholars have not noticed that the scenes in which Eros appear are different from other scenes of Helen’s recovery, but these differences should not be regarded as insignificant.

The new schema has another important difference from the others - its relation to other scenes on the same vase. In the new schema, Helen and Menelaos are always the main characters of a scene, and are not in surviving examples part of a larger *Ilioupersis* scene as they had been in other schema.¹⁶³ Indeed, the addition of Aphrodite and Eros

¹⁶⁰ For the tradition of warriors cowardly flinging away shields, see Ian Storey, “The ‘Blameless Shield’ of Kleonymos”, *RhM* 132 (1989) pp. 247-61. Satyrs are famed for their cowardice – see most recently Mark Griffin, “Slaves of Dionysos: Satyrs, Audience, and the Ends of the *Oresteia*,” *Classical Antiquity*, 21.2 (2002). pp. 195-258.

¹⁶¹ Aphrodite appears with Menelaos and Helen on Boston (MA), Museum of Fine Arts, 13.190, BA # 201000. Aphrodite or Eros on running schema vases: Paris, Musée du Louvre, G424, BA # 214486; Rome, Museo Torlonia, no inv. no., BA # 23625; St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, 4524, BA # 215792. To the best of my knowledge, no figures Eros appear other than in the running schema, but there are some fragmentary vases on which they are shown without enough remaining to be able to tell if Menelaos was running, although he seems to be doing so: Athens, Agora Museum, P21352, BA# 207057; Bologna, Museo Civico Archeologico, 235; BA # 205805; Boston (MA), Cornelius C. Vermeule, BA # 41051; Brauron, Archaeological Museum, no inv. no., BA # 207325; Malibu (CA), The J. Paul Getty Museum, 81.AE.183B, BA # 30684.

¹⁶² Boardman, HGV, 240; Carpenter, 210.

¹⁶³ This is probably true even of fragmentary examples, since with the larger distance between the couple, they could not easily fit into a corner of an *Ilioupersis* scene

shows Helen and Menelaos are in need of supporting figures rather than being supporting figures themselves. The new schema is more often used as the sole scene on a vase with only one field, such as a hydria or lekythos, than the other schema.¹⁶⁴ The reverse scenes are also very different. No warriors or other Trojan myths appear on the reverses of the new schema, as they had on the others.¹⁶⁵ The most common option is to include more figures having to do with the recovery scene, mostly fleeing companions of Helen; the exceptions are a few reverses of generic draped youths, a scene with maenads, and a komos.¹⁶⁶ Thus, while other schema had placed the recovery scene within the context of the Trojan war, the running schema removes the action from any context, making it a story in its own right.

The different red-figure schema for the recovery scene seem to have enjoyed almost equal popularity in the fifth century and were used by skilled as well as unskilled artists.¹⁶⁷ Because of this chronological overlap and the tendency of Athenian artists to

¹⁶⁴ Sole scene on a vase: Athens, National Museum, 14983, BA # 213443; Rome, Museo Torlonia, no inv. no., BA # 23625; St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, 4524, BA # 215792.

¹⁶⁵ with the exception of a cup in Tarquinia with the running schema on one side, Theseus abandoning Ariadne on the other, and a man leading a woman, presumably Ajax and Briseis, in the tondo. Tarquinia, Museo Nazionale Tarquiniese, RC5291, BA # 204395.

¹⁶⁶ Generic youths: Ferrara, Museo Nazionale di Spina, T577, BA # 206130; Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, H3129, BA # 215791; Paris, Musée du Louvre, G424, BA # 214486.

Maenads: London, British Museum, E263, BA # 206878.

Komos: Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, H3115, BA # 206047. Reverses with figures from recovery scene: London, British Museum, E294, BA # 207526 (old man with staff, gesturing forward); Tübingen, Eberhard-Karls-Univ., Arch. Inst., 67.5806, BA # 206757 (women fleeing towards an altar); Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, 741, BA # 201909 (woman fleeing).

use a single schema for a single scene, the existence of the very different running schema for the recovery scene should be seen as evidence that artists who chose it had different opinions about the scene than artists who retained the older schema.

The running schema would seem to accord with the comic Helen of literature, who is able to inspire such great desire that she can change her husband's mind about anything. On the vases, Helen's power is shown through the actions of Menelaos, who becomes like a satyr in his desperate chase, and through the presence of Aphrodite or Erotes, who over-determine Menelaos' desire. The comic reversal which makes a hero into a satyr is thus a joke, perfectly paralleled by the jokes that make satyrs into heroes, to be discussed in a later chapter.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ There is some evidence that the same painter used a schema multiple times, but there are not surviving indications that one painter used different schema. Beazley attributed three of the running schema vases to the Berlin Painter: Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, 126053, BA # 201896; Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, 1965.123, BA # 201973; and Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, 741, BA # 201909. To Oltos three vases of the non-running red-figure type are attributed: Malibu (CA), The J. Paul Getty Museum, 80.AE.154, BA # 16776; Paris, Musée du Louvre, G3, BA # 200435; and Odessa, Museum of Western and Eastern Art, 21972, BA # 200577.

¹⁶⁸ If Menelaos is satyr-like, one might think that Helen is also comically characterized beyond the idea of her desirability. Mitchell, though he believes that recovery scenes are not usually comic, has argued that a cup in Boston displays a humorous treatment of the subject, with an undignified exposure of Ajax, a youth who collides with the Athena from whom he seeks protection, and a Helen who acts like Cassandra, crouching by the altar as if she were about to be raped there, only, instead of being fearful, calmly uncovered her breasts while beckoning towards Menelaos. Mitchell also points out that Helen has an unusually short haircut, very much resembling that of the *porne* or prostitute. However, this Helen is so similar to Cassandra that she might actually be Cassandra, as Vermeule identifies her; as well, her breasts are simply uncovered, not in the process of being uncovered (and this might further support an identification as Cassandra, since she, but never Helen, frequently appears nude or partially nude on Attic vases). Mitchell's most important assertion, that the figure has a *porne*'s haircut, is also disputable, since it appears more likely that she wears her hair tucked up, a standard hairstyle. For these reasons, the Boston cup is not included in my catalogue of possible comic representations of the recovery of Helen. Alexandre G. Mitchell. *Comic Picture in Greek Vase-Painting*:

If the idea of “Menelaos as satyr” is the basic visual joke of these recovery scenes, this characterization has a number of interesting repercussions. Other recovery schema, with their calm confrontations and wedding gestures of leading by the wrist and veil-holding, had presented Menelaos and Helen as husband and wife. The running schema, with its visual connotations of great haste and satyr-like desire, make the couple look like a rapist and his victim. If Menelaos is like a rapist, then Helen must be like a virgin, since in Greek thought, the virgin was the kind of female able to provoke the greatest desire in males, and only virgins are the object of mythological rapes, both divine and heroic.¹⁶⁹ Of course, to make Helen virginal would be to make nonsense of the story of her recovery, since its motivation – the motivation, in fact, of the whole Trojan war – is that she is not a virgin, that she has had more than one husband. This removal of the recovery story from the logic of the Trojan story is paralleled by a refusal on the part of its painters to pair the comic recovery schema with other Trojan scenes. By doing this, the painters create a truly comic scene, one removed from the tragic ambiguities of the war and made into one of the scenes of cheerfully romantic rape so popular on Greek vases.

Humour in the Polis and the Dionysian World, in the Sixth and the Fifth Centuries B.C.
Thesis for D.Phil, School of Archeology, Oxford. Trinity Term, 2002. 215-216.

¹⁶⁹ Sourvinou-Inwood analyses scenes of erotic pursuit to argue that their iconography is motivated by Greek ideology of virginity and marriage-as-abduction. Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, “A Series of Erotic Pursuits: Images and Meanings,” *JHS*, 107 (1987). pp. 131-153. The attractiveness of the *parthenos* is discussed by Mary Lefkowitz in *Women in Greek Myth*. London: Duckworth, 1986; and “The Last Hours of the Parthenos,” in E.D. Reeder, ed., *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece* (Princeton, 1995) 32-38.

The bounding run and dropped heroic attribute feature in other mythological parodies; for example, on in a vase in Naples showing Iris chasing a young boy.¹⁷⁰ Mitchell argues that her dropped *kerykeion* (herald's wand) is a parody of Menelaos' dropped sword.¹⁷¹ Several other vases suggest that parody is not quite the relationship here. These are two vases on which Iris chases a youth without dropping her *kerykeion*.¹⁷² (fig. 2.75) This suggests that, while the detail of the dropped object might be inspired by Menelaos, Iris with a *kerykeion* chasing a youth is still a comprehensible and independently humorous scene. What makes it humorous, besides the idea of a female pursuer, is the bounding run that signals the driving lust of the seducer – and this is an element it shares with, not parodies from, the Menelaos and satyr scenes.

Congruities and Incongruities

Congruities

Certain figures seemingly appear only in serious vase scenes, such as, unsurprisingly, figures making gestures of mourning. Conversely, certain other figures or features are congruent only on non-serious scenes. Thus, just as a connoisseur can identify a scene from a Three Stooges movie without sight of the titular characters but merely from the props – cigars, wobbly ladders, and etc., so, too, certain otherwise non-remarkable features on Greek vases may indicate their non-serious nature. For example,

¹⁷⁰ Naples, Museo di Capodimonte, 1058.117, BA # 213747.

¹⁷¹ Alexandre G. Mitchell. *Comic Picture in Greek Vase-Painting: Humour in the Polis and the Dionysian World, in the Sixth and the Fifth Centuries B.C.* Thesis for D.Phil, School of Archeology, Oxford. Trinity Term, 2002. 80-81.

¹⁷² Graz, University, 236, BA # 204536 - not noted by Mitchell - and Syracuse, Mus. Reg., 53237, BA # 206615 on which see Mitchell, 81.

grape vines are painted into the background or held by the figures in almost every Dionysiac scene on Greek vases, while warriors and vines are very rarely combined.¹⁷³ Of these scenes with both warriors and vines, a third are scenes of warriors dicing.¹⁷⁴ (fig. 2.76) These vines thus are potent evidence of the non-serious nature of dicing warriors.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ Only around 15 vase-scenes with both a warrior and a vine out of the almost 2,200 scenes with vines listed in the Beazley Archive.

¹⁷⁴ Vines appear in dicing scene on: Brussels, Musées Royaux, R2512, BA # 306097; a black-figure cup in Capesthorpe Hall, Bromley-Davenport, BA # 352350; Copenhagen, Thorvaldsen Museum, 12, BA # 305996; Paris, Musée du Louvre, F414, BA # 331969; Tübingen, Eberhard-Karls-Univ., Arch. Inst., OZ213, BA # 5936.

¹⁷⁵ If scenes of dicing warriors are indeed comic, the question of its *meaning* is still unanswered. One possibility is that the dicing warriors may be a parody, since the dicing scene closely echoes another composition with Trojan warriors manipulating small objects while bending over a raised surface – the scene of the vote for the armor of Achilles. For these scenes, see Odette Touchefeu, LIMC I (1981), s.v. “Aias I,” no. 71-79. 325-326. These scenes illustrate the episode in the Trojan cycle in which the Greeks are called to decide to whom to award the armor, since both Ajax and Odysseus had laid claim to it. The jurors deposit their ballots – pebbles – in two piles, one for each of the rivals. In the vases, the ballots seem to be deposited on an altar, with Athena often standing behind, presiding over the vote. Ajax committed suicide after the vote decided for Odysseus. For a discussion of this episode, see Nigel Spivey, “Psephological Heroes,” in *Ritual, Finance, Politics: Athenian Democratic Accounts Presented to David Lewis*, ed. Robin Osborne and Simon Hornblower. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994. 39-51. There are some definite connections between dicing and voting in Greek literature: the word for the vessel into which the ballots were dropped is the same as for a dicing box (*khthion*; see Schol. Ar. *Vesp.* 674 and Hermippus, *Gods* in Edmonds, *Fragments of Attic Comedy*, vol. I.) However, scenes of warriors dicing far outnumber scenes of warriors voting, of which only about ten survive, the earliest of which dates far after the first surviving dicing scenes. This could be an accidental skewing, disguising some real wide-spread popularity in antiquity, but the composition of the scene is truly so complicated that it is more reasonable to suppose that it was relatively rarely painted. It would thus be strange to have more instances of a parody than of the thing parodied. Perhaps vase-painters, at least, had some intentions of referring to voting scenes, which they at least would have recognized. Trojan voting scenes: Athens, National Museum, Acropolis Coll., 2.315, BA # 204692; Dijon, Musée Archeologique, 1301, BA # 210292; Leiden, Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, PC75, BA # 204538; London, British Museum, E69, BA # 203901; Malibu (CA), The J. Paul Getty Museum, 86.AE.286, BA # 275946; Malibu (CA), The J. Paul Getty Museum, 90.AE.35, BA # 43899; New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 1974.226, BA # 205117; Vatican City, Museo Gregoriano Etrusco Vaticano, AST132,

Incongruities

In other scenes, it is the incongruity, rather than congruity, of elements that points to their humorousness. For example, some painters applied the iconography of mythological scenes to incongruous subjects, as when the Sandal Painter copies the poses of Ajax threatening Cassandra at the statue of Athena to render a slave-boy escaping a blow from a sandal by appealing to his mistress.¹⁷⁶ (fig. 2.77-2.78)

Another technique is to insert an incongruous object into a mythological scene, like the large, dead ram labeled “Pat[roklos]” fought over by otherwise dignified warriors on a stamnos by the Triptolemos Painter.¹⁷⁷ (fig. 2.78; compare to fig. 2.79)

BA # 205118; Vatican City, Museo Gregoriano Etrusco Vaticano, AST133, BA # 205117; Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, 3695, BA # 205070; Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, 675 etc., BA # 205058 (very fragmentary). The scene may also be shown, though with a different iconography (warriors placing olive leaves – as voting tokens? – in a phiale held by Athena) on Kansas City, Nelson-Atkins Museum, 30.13, BA # 202480. On the interpretation of this vase, see H.A. Shapiro, “The Judgment of Arms on an Amphora in Kansas City,” *BABesch* 56, 1981, 149-51.

¹⁷⁶ Bologna, Museo Civico Archeologico, PU204, BA # 300643; compare to Ajax and Cassandra on Rome, Mus. Naz. Etrusco di Villa Giulia, 50437.

¹⁷⁷ Basel, Antikenmuseum, BS 477, BA # 203796; compare to the warriors fighting over a fallen comrade on Berlin, Antikensammlung, F2264, BA # 200457. Some have thought that this scene is a serious version of the story of Patroklos’ death: see Alan Griffiths, “Patroklos the Ram,” *Bulletin of the Institute for Classical Studies*, 32 (1985), 49-50; and Alan Griffiths, “Patroklos the Ram (Again),” *Bulletin of the Institute for Classical Studies* 36 (1989), 139. For an opposing view, see Gregory Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999. Griffiths argues that the ram vase illustrates a not otherwise attested alternate version of the story of the death of Patroklos in which some god or goddess substituted for him a ram and thus deceived the remaining fighting warriors. This interpretation does not seem to be tenable for several reasons, among which would be the singular ineptness of such a divine substitution, resulting in the deaths not only of the substituted victim but also of the man who was supposed to be rescued. As well, the scene cannot be a conventional fight for a body because of the presence of the flanking old men. Fights for bodies take place on battlefields but old men stay at home or in camp. Moreover, Hektor and the Greek warrior are cowardly being restrained from fighting, by their elderly

In other scenes, the incongruousness may lie in the characters, as in scenes of musicians or old men dicing, which may be parodies of the popular iconography of the dicing heroes Ajax and Achilles. (fig. 2.80-2.81) Similar are the scenes with dicing warriors who are flanked by non-heroic companions - dancing women.¹⁷⁸ (fig. 2.82)

Mixed Techniques and Other Comparisons

attendants. Instead of illustrating an alternate version of epic, the scene uses heroic characters to illustrate an impossibly-heroic scene. The interpretation of this choice may be aided by the fact that the ram, as is obvious from its ostentatious slit throat, is shown as *sacrificed*. Complaints about the costs of sacrifices are frequent in Greek literature and generally take the form of laments about not being able to enjoy the meat one has purchased because it is all consumed by guests and priests. The situation was in fact proverbial – “He buys meat after a Delphic sacrifice” was used of those “who are put to great expense for nothing. Because those who sacrificed at Delphi could not get a taste themselves, the guests were so many.” Edmonds, *Fragments of Attic Comedy*, Vol. IIIA. 429. Delphian priests were particularly famous for their rapaciousness. Again, there is a proverb – “the Delphian knife” – which was used to describe “those who are fond of gain and always on the make; because the Delphians not only took part of sacrifices, but charged [the pilgrims] for the knife.” Edmonds, *Fragments of Attic Comedy*, Vol. I. 761. Delphian sacrificial attendants supposedly surrounded the altar, each one carrying a knife, waiting for the officiating priest to kill the animal and removed its innards, after which they fought over the carcass, each cutting off a piece with his knife, so that often nothing was left for the sacrifice, as is described in Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 1800, fr. 2, col. 2, 32 ff. This fragment has been interpreted by Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans*, and is further commented on by Marcel Detienne and Jesper Svenbro in *The Cuisine of Sacrifice Among the Greeks*, ed. Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant, trans. Paula Wissing. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989. 162. Greek literature frequently mentions other disputes over food, with one stock joke being the quarrels among guests at Athenian-style dinner party, where the host provided small amounts of many different dishes. uch jokes use the language of war, so that dinner guests are said to fight, ravage, and loot: Athenaeus, 8.344e on the famously greedy man Lampon, says that he would “fight for a mullet” (*maxoito*); Etymologicum Magnum, 713.29: “The Attic writers use *sinamwrein* ‘to ravage’ in the sense of *lixneuein* ‘to lick up greedily’, and Pherecrates calls such ‘loot’ *sinamwreumata*.” Edmonds, *Fragments of Attic Comedy*, Vol. I. 283. See also Athenaeus, 10.421b: “Mnesimachos, too, owing to the extremes to which overeating had come, speaks of a dinner party summoned as preparation for war, truly, as the admirable Xenophon put it, a war-workshop.” Also: Zen. 2.19, cf. Sch. Plat. Symp. 174b. Perhaps the stamnos, as well, uses heroic characters to parody a fight over sacrificial meat.

¹⁷⁸ Paris, Musée du Louvre, F414, BA # 331969.

Many obvious comic cues help us to place in the same humorous category similar images without these extra cues. We can also compare the various works of individual painters, since some – the Geras Painter, for instance – seem often to have produced comic scenes, the more obvious of which might provide clues for understanding other, subtler images.¹⁷⁹

Example: Eos, Nike, and Other Lovers of Boys with Lyres

A complex example of a set of scenes that I identify as humorous on the basis of the preceding tests may be the best way to argue for their justifiability. These scenes – of Eos, Nike, Hermes, and others, have not before been seen as humorous, but I hope to show that they are, and are interestingly meaningful as humor.

Eos, the dawn goddess, chasing a boy with a lyre is one of the most popular scenes of erotic pursuit on Greek vases. In ancient literature, stories of female deities falling in love with mortal men were very subject to comic treatment in Greek literature. They were comic not only because of the inversion of the power relation of gods and mortals, but also because these stories transformed a female into a seducer instead of the seduced, her usual role in Greek thought.¹⁸⁰ Stories of seducer goddesses gained even

¹⁷⁹ For an attempt to collate painters and favorite subjects, see John Boardman, “Exekias”, *AJA* lxxxii, 1978, 11-24. 13. Boardman looked at the entire known output of certain painters or groups to conclude that the painters of Group E show a special interest in hero scenes, especially those with Herakles; the Amasis Painter favors “funloving” scenes; and “The Swing and especially the Princeton Painter have a strong propensity for warlike scenes and there is a singular dearth of komos, symposion or Dionysiac scenes in the work of the latter.”

¹⁸⁰ “In Greek myth, the desiring subject is by nature masculine.” Jeffrey Carnes, “The Ends of the Earth: Fathers, Ephebes, and Wild Women in *Nemean* 4 and 5.” *Arethusa* 29.1 (1996). pp. 15-55. 26. For another discussion of the irregularity of a women as a sexual pursuer, see David Konstan, “Women, Boys, and the Paradigm of Athenian

more effectiveness for their being a relatively rare, for while almost every notable male god had dalliances with mortal women, of the goddesses, some are sworn virgins, while others, like well behaved mortal females, either never leave their home on Olympos or indignantly report and punish any attempt on their virtue. Only Thetis, Harmonia, Aphrodite, Circe, Calypso, and Eos, the winged dawn-goddess, are notable in literary sources for having had affairs with mortal men, and their affairs are the product of much pain to the participants (with the exception of those of Thetis and Harmonia, to be discussed at the end of this chapter). Circe was lampooned in titles of Greek Middle Comedy - both Ehippus and Anaxilas wrote plays called *Circe* - and her first encounter with Odysseus is ludicrously depicted on Kabirion ware, as we will see.¹⁸¹ Aphrodite's affair with Anchises also has connections with laughter. It is described in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, one of the earliest and most explicit sources for Greek thought about the loves of the female gods. In it, Aphrodite's desire is described as a sort of practical joke on the part of the male Olympians, tired of Aphrodite laughing at them for having seduced mere mortals. Eos' affairs are not so explicitly described as humorous in surviving literary sources. By contrast to the other seducer goddesses, who consort only with one mortal and sometimes with him only one, Eos is a repeat offender, for Aphrodite had cursed her with a desire for mortal youths after having caught her in bed with Ares; thus, fittingly, she is turned from the (presumably) seduced into the seducer,

Pederasty," in *differences*, 13.2 (2002) pp. 35-56; and also Dover, who comments on pursuing goddesses that "When goddesses fall in love with mortal males, as Aphrodite did with Adonis, Dawn with Tithonos or the Moon with Endymion, they react like older males..." Kenneth J. Dover. *Greek Homosexuality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977. 172.

¹⁸¹ London, British Museum, 93.3-3.1.

loving feeble mortal youths instead of being loved by a powerful, mature god.¹⁸² Eos is said to have abducted Orion, Kephalos, and Tithonos. Apollodorus describes Orion as having further adventures after his affair with Eos, and so she must have set him free again.¹⁸³ Kephalos was a young hunter, kidnapped by Eos as he stalked his prey at dawn; he, like Orion, seems to have been eventually returned by Eos to earth.¹⁸⁴ Besides the several later sources who call him a shepherd, nothing is known about the circumstances of the abduction of Tithonos, a Trojan prince, son of Laomedon and brother of Priam.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² The curse is recorded by Apollod. 1.4.3. For Eos, see Theog. 372; Od. 5.1, 5.121ff, 23.246; Homeric hymn to Aphrodite, 218ff; Hellanicus FGrH 4 F140; Ovid, Met. 7.690ff. For modern bibliography and analysis, see C. Weiss in *LIMC* III, s.v. "Eos," 747-89; and S. Kaempf-Dimitriadou, *Die Liebe der Götter in der attischen Kunst des V. Jahrhunderts v. Chr. Antike Kunst*, Beiheft 11. Basel: Vereinigung der Freunde, 1979. pp. 16-21 and 81-93. See also Carol Benson, "Eos and Kephalos, Eos and Tithonos," in *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, ed. Ellen D. Reeder. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995. pp. 398-402 and Eve Stehle, "Sappho's Gaze: Fantasies of a Goddess and Young Man," *differences* 2.1 (1990), 88-125.

¹⁸³ For Orion, see Apollodorus 1.4.3; Homer, *Od.* 5.118; Nonnus, *Dionysiaca* 4.192, 5.516, and 11.388. For Orion's further adventures, see Apollodorus 1.4.2-3.

¹⁸⁴ For Kephalos, see Apollodorus, 1.9.4; Hes. Th. 986.; Paus. 1.3.1; Ant. Lib. 41; Ov. Met. 7.700-713; Hyginus, Fab. 198 and 270; Nonnus, *Dionysiaca* 48.680.

¹⁸⁵ Tithonos as a shepherd: Statius, *Silvae* 1.2.43 and Nonnus, *Dionysiaca* 15.279. Other source on Tithonos: Apollodorus, 3.12.4; Il. 11.1; Od. 5.1; Hesiod, *Theogony* 984; Sappho, frg. 58; Ibykos, Page *PMG* frg. 286; Eur. *Troj.* 847-858; Lycophron 18-19, with schol.; Scholiast on Hom. *Il.* 11.1; Mimnermus frg. 4, from Stobaeus, *Anthology*; Quintus Smyrnaeus, *Fall of Troy* 2.115; Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 1.6c; Hyginus, *Fabulae* 270; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 9.420; Prop. ii.18.7-18; *Suidas*, s.v. "andra tithonon". A lengthy description is in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, with Aphrodite as the speaker: "So also golden-throned Eos rapt away Tithonos who was of your race and like the deathless gods. And she went to ask the dark-clouded Son of Kronos that he should be deathless and live eternally; and Zeus bowed his head to her prayer and fulfilled her desire. Too simple was Lady Eos: she thought not in her heart to ask for youth for him and to strip him of the slough of deadly age. So while he enjoyed the sweet flower of life he lived rapturously with golden-throned Eos the early-born, by the streams of Okeanos, at the ends of the earth; but when the first grey hairs began to ripple from his comely head and noble chin,

Literary interest was focused on aftermath of the abduction – Eos obtained from Zeus the gift of immortality for her lover, but, since she forgot to ask for immortal youth as well, he continued to age until a disgusted Eos locked him away in a room of her palace.

In vase-painting, Eos is the most popular divinity to be depicted in pursuit of a mortal, with nearly two hundred red-figure vases of the subject in the second and third quarters of fifth century.¹⁸⁶ No known scene has such an explicitly comic appearance as does the Kabirion scenes of Odysseus and Circe, but that the seduction of a mortal male by an immortal female is characterized as laughable even by Aphrodite is a sign that painted versions of Eos scenes could possibly have comic overtones as well. The following analysis of these scenes will show that they have visual links to other scenes which make clear their parodic and humorous resonances.

On the vases, Eos chases two different boys.¹⁸⁷ One is easily identified as Kephalos the hunter by his hunting spears, cloak and hat.¹⁸⁸ (fig. 2.83) Much more

Lady Eos kept away from his bed, though she cherished him in her house and nourished him with food and ambrosia and gave him rich clothing. But when loathsome old age pressed full upon him, and he could not move nor lift his limbs, this seemed to her in her heart the best counsel: she laid him in a room and put to the shining doors. There he babbles endlessly, and no more has strength at all, such as once he had in his supple limbs.” 218ff. Vermeule understands Tithonos’ fate as a “sexual joke”. Vermeule, *Aspects of Death*, 164. For the treatment of Tithonos in Greek literature, see C. Segal, *Tragedy and Civilization: An Interpretation of Sophocles*. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1981, 24; H. King, “Tithonos the Tettix,” *Arethusa*, 19 (1986), 15-35.

¹⁸⁶ Carina Weiss, LIMC III (1986), s.v. “Eos” 747-89. Eos abducting a boy was also a popular subject for akroteria: such groups appeared on the Stoa Basileios, Athenian Agora (terracotta group of Eos and Kephalos), Paus. 1.3.1, with remaining fragments: Athens, Agora Museum, T 1261, T 3317, T 3987; LIMC s.v. “Eos” no. 282; Temple of the Athenians, Delos (marble group of Eos and Kephalos, flanked by Nikai), Delos Museum A 4279 through A 4282; LIMC s.v. “Eos” no. 280.

popular, which over a hundred examples, appearing especially for about the fifty years from ca. 480, are scenes with Eos chasing another youth who is dressed like an Athenian boy and usually holds a lyre. He is generally, though perhaps somewhat problematically, identified as Tithonos.¹⁸⁹ (fig. 2.84)

¹⁸⁷ On the general tendency in classical Greek thought to believe that women were attracted to adolescent boys, see David Konstan, "Women, Boys, and the Paradigm of Athenian Pederasty," in *differences*, 13.2 (2002) pp. 35-56. He collects general examples: Phaedra's love for Hippolytus and Aphrodite's love for Adonis, as well as specific quotations: Aristophanes, *Lysistrata* 414-15; Euripides, *Bacchae*, 172 and 453-59; Apollonius, *Argonautica* 1.1229-50. He also mentions that the love of women for boys is a pervasive motif in the Greek novels - for example, *Daphnis and Chloe*, *Ephesiaca*, *Clitopho and Leucippe*, and *Aethiopica* each feature a mature woman in love with an ephebe. On the general tendency in the classical period to see beauty as the proper province of women and boys, not of men, and the corresponding representation of boys as desirable, see Richard Hawley, "The Dynamics of Beauty in Classical Greece," in *Changing Bodies, Changing Meanings: Studies on the Human Body in Antiquity*, ed. Dominic Montserrat. London: Routledge, 1998. For a study of the attractions of a youthful Adonis, see Joseph D. Reed, "The Sexuality of Adonis," *Classical Antiquity* 14.2 (1995). pp. 317-347.

¹⁸⁸ For Kephalos, see Carina Weiss, LIMC III (1986), s.v. "Eos" 739-64, nos. 46-133. On several vases, inscriptions name him as Kephalos, and it is generally assumed that the unnamed hunters are Kephalos as well, though Orion was also abducted while hunting: Eos and Kephalos are both named on Malibu (CA), The J. Paul Getty Museum, 84.AE.569, BA # 16200; Warsaw, National Museum, 142261, BA # 213458; and Madrid, Museo Arqueológico Nacional, 11097, BA # 213548; Kephalos alone is named on Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, 423, BA # 213704.

¹⁸⁹ For Tithonos, see Carina Weiss, LIMC III (1986), s.v. "Eos" 764-68, nos. 134-190. The youth will here be called Tithonos, even though this identification is problematic. There are no literary sources which tell us that Tithonos was associated with lyres; we must instead work from the several instances where the youth is inscribed "Tithonos." A youth inscribed "Tithonos" appears only on two vases, on one of which he is dressed as a hunter and seems thus to be confused with the iconography of Kephalos, while on the other, it is not the boy that Eos chases who is named Tithonos, but rather one of his fleeing companions: Tithonos, named, dressed as a hunter: St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, ST1683, BA # 213556; Tithonos, named, as companion of pursued boy: Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, 846, BA # 213628. Moreover, there are two vases on which Eos, named, flies away with a boy who holds a lyre, though these boys are named by an inscription as "Kephalos": Florence, Museo Archeologico Etrusco, 4228, BA # 213269 and Matera, Museo Nazionale Domenico Ridola, 11957, BA # 6762. Beazley

Based on the arguments in the previous section about the comic running style of Menelaos in some scenes of the recovery of Helen, we could use this comparison to argue that Eos and Tithonos scenes are comic in themselves, since on some vases these figures, too, run with the same comic bounds.¹⁹⁰ (fig. 2.68; compare to 2.85) Still, it may be more profitable to attempt another way of argumentation for the possible comicity of Eos scenes by looking at their relationships with other, similar scenes. If these similar scenes are arguably comic, and if Eos scenes are arguably of the same type, then Eos scenes will be shown to be comic as well.

One promising avenue of investigation is a group of Eos and Tithonos scenes in which the winged goddess is shown holding out fillets as if she were going to congratulate the boy on a victory instead of abduct him.¹⁹¹ (fig. 2.86-2.87) When she

pointed out this “serious difficulty” in identifying all boys with lyres as Tithonos, but scholars have accepted his proposal of this identification without remembering his hesitations. Lacey Davis Caskey and J.D. Beazley, *Attic vase paintings in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*. London, Oxford University Press, 1931. 37-38. On the name confusion, see most recently Carina Weiss, LIMC III (1986), s.v. “Eos” 776-77.

¹⁹⁰ It is sometimes difficult to tell if the positioning of Eos’ feet above the ground line is meant to show that she is running or that she is flying, but for definitely exaggerated runs, see: Chicago (IL), Art Institute, 89.95, BA # 205952; Lipari, Museo Eoliano, 9622, BA # 8739; New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 12.236.2, BA # 213844; New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 25.189.3, BA # 204100; Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, 362, BA # 207369.

¹⁹¹ Winged goddess holding a fillet: Padua, Museo Archeologico d. Lucania Occ., TV5; Lille, Musée de Beaux Arts, 69, BA # 207203; Berlin, Antikensammlung, 4982.32, BA # 207879; Berlin, Antikensammlung, F2210, BA # 207649. The possibilities for this confusion have not been discussed in print, but have been practically realized by catalogers of vases; thus the Beazley Archive description of Berlin, Antikensammlung, F2210, BA # 207649 is “Winged woman with fillet (Eros [sic]? Or Nike?) pursuing draped youth with lyre (Tithonos?)” The mistake of “Eros” for “Eos” is, as we shall see, very understandable.

holds such fillets, she looks very much like Nike.¹⁹² Unless they are named, it is often difficult to tell apart Eos and the goddess Nike, since both have no regular attribute apart from their wings.¹⁹³ Nike is often associated with lyre-holding youths on Greek vases, since besides attending gods and heroes, her duties often include offering wreaths of fillets to victorious youths.¹⁹⁴ (fig. 2.88-2.89) The majority of these hold lyres and seem to have won lyre competitions.¹⁹⁵ Some so-called Eos and Tithonos scenes have contest overtones, since they add to the main characters other youths, with or without musical instruments, and sometimes even an older seated or standing man with a staff who looks

¹⁹² In print, this idea seems to be unprecedented, except in so far as Osborne links Eos and Nike, arguing that the wings they share as an attribute symbolize that both victory and the dawn are “evanescent, fading and disappearing at no particular moment.” He suggests that Eos’ particular sexual charge might have to do with these qualities of sudden and unexpected winged arrival of the sort Eros or love itself makes. He then discusses the fifth century tendency of sculptors to present Nike as sexually desirable, proposing that the popularity of Eos scenes stems from the same mode of thought – if the sculptures are about the difficulty of keeping victory, the pots are about the difficulty of “sustaining the peak of sexual desire”. Robin Osborne, “Desiring Women on Athenian Pottery,” in *Sexuality in Ancient Art: Near East, Egypt, Greece, and Italy*, ed. Natalie Boymel Kampen. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. pp. 65-80. 69.

¹⁹³ For Nike, see: Alikia Moustaka, Alexandra Goulaki-Voutira, and Ursula Grote, LIMC (1992) s.v. “Nike,” 851-904; and, most recently, Cornelia Thone, *Ikongraphische Studien zu Nike im 5. Jahrhundert v. Chr.: Untersuchungen zur Wirkungsweise und Wesenart*. Heidelberg: Verlag Archäologie und Geschichte, 1999.

¹⁹⁴ E.g., Paris, Musée du Louvre, G278, BA # 204415 and Florence, Museo Archeologico Etrusco, 81268, BA # 206520.

¹⁹⁵ Munich, Antikensammlungen, J416, BA # 206563; Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, 1916.13, BA # 217076; Paris, Musée du Louvre, G278, BA # 204415; Paris, Musée du Louvre, N3393, BA # 11285; Geneva, Musée d’Art et d’Histoire, 14987, BA # 214258; Leipzig, Antikenmuseum d. Universität Leipzig, T3577, BA # 212198; Malibu (CA), The J. Paul Getty Museum, S80.AE.290, BA # 43455; Hamburg, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, 1983.279, BA # 3156.

like be the judge or supervisor of a competition.¹⁹⁶ (fig. 2.90-2.91) That the youths are competitors and not merely music-learning schoolboys could be indicated by the vases on which more than one of them holds a lyre, since scenes of education seem to generally feature only one lyre.¹⁹⁷ (fig. 2.92-2.93) Moreover, the pursued youth is often shown wearing a wreath, as if decorated for a festival or already a victor.¹⁹⁸ As for the winged goddess, she is similar to Nike not only when she holds fillets but on those vases where she, not the running youth, holds a lyre; this is perhaps best explained not as the fruits of a preliminary pass but rather by analogy to vases on which a Nike holds the instrument of a triumphant youth.¹⁹⁹ (fig. 2.94-2.95) Finally, the placement of the pursuing winged

¹⁹⁶ Multiple youths: Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, 1916.13, BA # 217076; Edinburgh, National Museums of Scotland, 1877.29, BA # 213442; Florence, Museo Archeologico Etrusco, 3995, BA # 205390. A judge-like man: Paris, Musée du Louvre, G278, BA # 204415; Paris, Musée du Louvre, N3393, BA # 11285; Geneva, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, 14987, BA # 214258; Edinburgh, National Museums of Scotland, 1877.29, BA # 213442; Florence, Museo Archeologico Etrusco, 3995, BA # 205390; Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, 3700, BA # 211606.

¹⁹⁷ Multiple lyres: Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, 3700, BA # 211606; Rome, Mus. Naz. Etrusco di Villa Giulia, 5350, BA # 212654; Greece, private coll., BA # 205722 (Beazley, J.D., *Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters*, 2nd edition (Oxford, 1963), 509). For education scenes, see for example Berlin, Antikensammlung, F2549, BA # F2549; Ferrara, Museo Nazionale di Spina, T45CVP, BA # 203657.

¹⁹⁸ Ferrara, Museo Nazionale di Spina, T709, BA # 214795; Florence, Museo Archeologico Etrusco, 4228, BA # 213269; Lille, Musée de Beaux Arts, 69, BA # 207203; London, British Museum, E214, BA # 214530; Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale; Paris, Musée du Louvre, G492, BA # 213685.

¹⁹⁹ Winged woman pursues while holding a lyre: Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, GR22.1937, BA # 206466. Nike flies while holding a lyre: Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, 86313, BA # 216806; Taranto, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, 54384, BA # 206310. While holding a kithara: Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, 698, BA # 207380; Madrid, Museo Arqueológico Nacional, L176, BA # 207569; Ferrara, Museo Nazionale di Spina, T45CVP, BA # 205735.

goddess on one side of a vase and the fleeing youth on the other is reminiscent of the many vases in which Nike, on one side, flies towards a victor, on the other.²⁰⁰

A few vases offer more explicit indications of a contest setting for the pursuit. One is a krater in Florence.²⁰¹ (fig. 2.96) On one side, two Nikai offer fillets to a youth holding a lyre. On the reverse, which is unfortunately fragmentary, a youth flees from a figure of whom only an outstretched hand and the top of the head survive. This head is covered in what must be a female headdress, and there is space enough for this figure to have been winged. Another vase, an amphora in Paris, shows a lyre-holding youth on one side and a judge with a staff on the other, and is thus very similar to amphorae showing kitharodistic competitions, for example that of the Berlin Painter in New York.²⁰² (fig. 2.97-2.98) The painter of the Paris amphora has added a winged goddess who chases the lyre-holding youth; he is wearing a wreath, and the attached plectrum trails from his lyre, making clear that he was interrupted in the middle of a performance. Between his shoulder and the woman's outstretched hand is inscribed "kallos," apparently to indicate

²⁰⁰ Pursuing winged woman and victim on either side of a vase: Köln, Hunsdiecker, BA # 207658; Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, H3046, BA # 207638; Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, 1930.3; Padua, Museo Archeologico d. Lucania Occ., TV5. Nike and a (non-pursued) victorious youth on either side of a vase appear, for example on: London, British Museum, E287, BA # 202127; Berlin, Antikensammlung, F2258, BA # 204394; Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, 698, BA # 207380; Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, 361, BA # 207582; New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 06.1021.115, BA # 207809.

²⁰¹ Florence, Museo Archeologico Etrusco, 81268, BA # 206520.

²⁰² Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, 358, BA # 207528; New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 56.171.38, BA # 201811. There are several other examples of vases with a lyre-holding youth pursued by a winged woman on one side and a man with a staff on the reverse: New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 12.236.2, BA # 213844 and New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 25.189.2, BA # 213827.

the reason for her assault.²⁰³ This winged goddess must be Nike, since she functions as a parody of the normal iconography and role of this goddess – she is supposed to offer a fillet to the victorious youth but, irresistibly attracted by his beauty, she has forgotten her duty and tries to abduct him, copying iconography and ideas from Eos.²⁰⁴

It is worth exploring this idea of Nike before returning to the question of whether it is she or Eos who has most to do with boys on the other vases. Nike, since she is a personification of victory, is shown in Greek art as a beautiful woman in order to emphasize how desirable it is to be victorious. Most well-known are the reliefs from the balustrade of the Temple of Athena Nike on the Athenian Acropolis, where a procession of Nikai carry trophies, lead sacrificial bulls, and stop to fasten up their sandals – opportunities for greatly seductive poses, with drapery in parts revealing and in parts tantalizingly concealing the body. (fig. 2.99) The personification of victory is thus just as desirable as victory itself.²⁰⁵ The seductiveness of Nike seems to have been the basis for

²⁰³ Another similarly positioned “kallos” appears on the Eos scene on Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery 48.2034, BA # 205721.

²⁰⁴ Thus, besides the pursuing Iris identified by Mitchell, Nike is added to the list of female figures who chase males in Greek art, though the current consensus is that “[a]mong the many gods and some heroes (as well as unidentified males) who are shown in sexual pursuit, there is but one female figure who pursues males: Eos.” Robin Osborne, “Desiring Women on Athenian Pottery,” in *Sexuality in Ancient Art: Near East, Egypt, Greece, and Italy*, ed. Natalie Boymel Kampen. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. pp. 65-80. 67.

²⁰⁵ “The seductive display of a female body excites men to desire possession, as men also desire to possess victory.” Osborne, *Archaic and Classical Greek Art*, 185. See also R. Osborne, “Looking on – Greek style. Does the Sculpted Girl Speak to Women Too?” in *Classical Greece: Ancient History and Modern Archaeology*, ed. Ian Morris. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. pp. 81-96. More generally on the Temple of Athena Nike see I. Mark, *The Sanctuary of Athena Nike in Athens: Architectural Stages and Chronology* (Princeton, 1993).

several kinds of jokes on Greek vases. A cup in Toronto is painted with groups of draped boys and one pair of a man leaning on his staff and making a gesture towards a winged woman, who is the only non-human figure on the cup.²⁰⁶ (fig. 2.100) Nike would not normally appear in such a scene, for there are no victors for her to crown nor sacrifice for her to attend; the cup seems rather to be a parody of her seductiveness, since her pose and that of the man recall scenes of men in negotiation with hetaerae.²⁰⁷ (fig. 2.101) This interpretation is supported by the tondo of the Toronto cup, which shows a man and a hetaera drinking together on a couch. (fig. 2.102) The same inference is perhaps also meant to be drawn for similar cup in London.²⁰⁸ (fig. 2.103) These painters have thus turned desirable Nike is turned into a desirable – and more easily attainable – prostitute – whose price is, perhaps, not so high.

More similar to the abduction scenes are a few vases which also parody Nike by slightly altering her usual role. For example, she often assists a youth making a sacrifice at an altar, flying towards him with a phiale, but on at least one vase she holds a jug instead and flies not to a sacrifice, but a komos.²⁰⁹ (fig. 2.104). On a vase in Rome, Nike brings a helmet to a youth who is revealed by turning the vase to be not a victorious

²⁰⁶ Toronto, Royal Ontario Museum, 959.17.95, BA # 212514.

²⁰⁷ A recent survey of scenes of hetaerae in negotiation is Carola Reinsberg, *Ehe, Hetärentum und Knabenliebe im antiken Griechenland*. Munich: C.H. Beck, 1989. 120-125.

²⁰⁸ London, British Museum, E107, BA # 212649, whose sexual charge is increased by the enormously ithyphallic herm on the interior – another over-sexing of a deity. See also Munich, Antikensammlungen, J679, BA # 211262 and Philadelphia (PA), University of Pennsylvania, 2440, BA # 212060.

²⁰⁹ For Nike with a phiale, see for example: With a jug: Würzburg, Universität, Martin von Wagner Mus., H4937, BA # 211488.

warrior but another skyphos-carrying komast.²¹⁰ (fig. 2.105) These three vases carry out a comic reversal in the youths and situations Nike is supposed to attend. In the pursuit scenes, on the other hand, the youth remains the same, but it is Nike who has changed. This is another way of making a joke about her desirability – by claiming that not only is she greatly desirable but that she in turn is greatly desirous – of boys.

That some, at least, of the vases of winged goddesses chasing boys seem to portray or allude to Nike does not solve the problem of her identity elsewhere, especially since neither the goddess nor the youth carry any attributes on some vases,²¹¹ and the goddess in scenes where the youth carries a lyre but there is no other sign of a competition cannot unhesitatingly be called Nike.²¹² It is impossible to identify the different goddesses on the basis of dress.²¹³ There are a few instances in which it is

²¹⁰ Rome, Mus. Naz. Etrusco di Villa Giulia, 3573, BA # 205613.

²¹¹ Athens, National Museum, CC1222, BA # 205822; New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 25.189.3, BA # 204100; Paris, Musée Auguste Rodin, 1019, BA # 214620; Paris, Musée du Louvre, G492, BA # 213685; Berkeley (CA), Phoebe Apperson Hearst Mus. of Anthropology, 8.3373, BA # 215099; Ferrara, Museo Nazionale di Spina, T42DVP, BA # 205672.

²¹² Youth with lyre: Basel, Antikenmuseum und Sammlung Ludwig, BS1906.295, BA # 206034; Berlin, Antikensammlung, F2547, BA # 211242; Chicago (IL), Art Institute, 89.95, BA # 205952; Ferrara, Museo Nazionale di Spina, T918, BA # 205783; Frankfurt, Liebieghaus, 5327, BA # 204665; Kansas City (MO), Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, 33.3.2, BA # 214104; Köln, Hunsdiecker, BA # 207658; London, British Museum, E214, BA # 214530; London, British Museum, E355, BA # 212967; Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale; Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, 81541, BA # 205764; Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, 358, BA # 207528; Stockholm, National Museum, 25, BA # 275664.

²¹³ On such vases, and indeed in all their appearances, it is very difficult to distinguish Nike from Eos, since they share wings and the same style of dress. The only element that is different from one representation to the next is the hairstyle, for the winged women can wear their hair down with a fillet or a diadem or up in a headdress; however, both Nike

tempting to identify Eos instead of Nike, as on the two cups which feature scenes of a winged goddess chasing a boy on their tondos and scenes of Zeus pursuing a nymph on their exteriors.²¹⁴ (fig. 2.106-2.107) It might be Eos, not Nike, who would appear in this exalted company; however, on one of these cups, a winged goddesses chases her youth not only in the tondo but also on one side of the exterior; in this scene, they are accompanied by more youths, at least one of whom also had a lyre, and a man with a staff, both of which are signs of the contest setting and thus indications that the woman might be Nike.²¹⁵ (fig. 2.91)

The difficulties of identifying the winged seducer goddess are real, but they are perhaps a sign that an association of ideas was more important to the painter than a specific identification. Thus, the scenes in which the goddess is most likely Nike work

and Eos, on vases where they are named or their identification is otherwise uncontroversial, wear a fillet, diadem, or headdress interchangeably, and thus cannot be told apart. (Eos wears a fillet on London, British Museum, E449, BA # 213469; a diadem on Boston (MA), Museum of Fine Arts, 97.368, BA # 202631; and a headdress on Paris, Musée du Louvre, G115, BA # 205119.) A few vases where the winged woman wears a fancy pointed diadem might indicate that she is Eos. (Chicago (IL), Art Institute, 89.95, BA # 205952; Kansas City (MO), Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, 33.3.2, BA # 214104; Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, no inv. no. (Beazley, J.D., *Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters*, 2nd edition (Oxford, 1963), 309.1).) However, the impossibility of relying on such details is shown by a cup in New York, which repeats on its two sides a scene of a winged woman chasing a youth, but on one side the youth holds a lyre and on the other nothing, while on one side the woman wears her hair up in a headdress and on the other down with a fillet. (New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, GR597, BA # 211714.) It is true that Greek vase-painter sometimes repeated a scene on the sides of a vase with small changes in the figures for the sake of variation, but the New York cup suggests rather the easy multiplying of Nikai

²¹⁴ Rome, Market, BA # 211610 (Beazley, J.D., *Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters*, 2nd edition (Oxford, 1963), 883.46); Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, 3700, BA # 211606. For discussion of this cup, see Robin Osborne, "Desiring Women on Athenian Pottery," in *Sexuality in Ancient Art: Near East, Egypt, Greece, and Italy*, ed. Natalie Boymel Kampen. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. pp. 65-80. 69-70.

²¹⁵ Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, 3700, BA # 211606.

precisely because of a conflation with Eos, while on the cups with scenes of a pursuing Zeus, it does not really matter who the goddess is, since their humorous juxtaposition stems merely from the idea of showing not only men pursuing women but also women pursuing men, giving an idea of “tables turned.”

The ambiguity of the identification extends to the youth, who is characterized not as a Trojan prince of the heroic age but rather as a contemporary citizen boy. The key to this is his lyre, and we should ask what it meant that he held this instead of any other attribute. It could be that a lost literary source described Tithonos as being abducted while holding a lyre or even during a lyre competition, though it seems unlikely that he would have been so occupied at dawn, the time when Eos moves over the earth. Even if this were true, his lyre would have deeper meanings for a Greek audience. Dover has discussed the association of the lyre with youthful male beauty in Greek art, pointing out especially scenes of Eros holding a lyre.²¹⁶ Dover argues that this is in part because the lyre was specially associated with youth, since training in playing it and singing to its accompaniment was an important part of the education of boys, at least in Athens.²¹⁷ The

²¹⁶ Kenneth J. Dover. *Greek Homosexuality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977. 75. His other examples are the tomb of the Diver from Paestum; Boston (MA), Museum of Fine Arts 13.94, BA # 9017565; New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 28.157, BA # 211738; Gotha, 48, BA # 200100; Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, 3698, BA # 204875; Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, 37.26, BA # 205683; Cleveland (OH), Museum of Art, 24.197, BA # 206446; Berkeley (CA), Phoebe Apperson Hearst Mus. of Anthropology, 8.4581, BA # 213265. Osborne follows this idea, writing that the presence of lyres in Eos scenes displays “the sexual attractions of musical culture”. Robin Osborne, “Desiring Women on Athenian Pottery,” in *Sexuality in Ancient Art: Near East, Egypt, Greece, and Italy*, ed. Natalie Boymel Kampen. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. pp. 65-80. 70.

²¹⁷ Kenneth J. Dover. *Greek Homosexuality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977. 75. To support this, Dover cites Clouds 964-72, Pl. Prt. 326a, Pl. Lys. 209a.

close associations between youth and lyres, whereby a lyre is an emblem and nearly a symbol of youth, can be further demonstrated by the appearance of lyres on funerary lekythoi, where they emphasize the youth and beauty of the deceased.²¹⁸ Dover also points out that, if youths and lyres are so closely associated, it is obvious that men attracted to youths will be even more attracted to lyre-players, since they are so symbolically youthful, quoting several instances of homosexuals favoring *kitharoidoi*.²¹⁹ The association of lyre-playing and youthful beauty, when considered in the light of the attraction winged goddesses feel for lyre-playing boys, lends additional support to Dover's claim that seducer goddesses act towards beloved boys as do the men who courted them in real life.²²⁰ That is, the winged goddess pursues lyre-playing boys on

²¹⁸ For example, Berlin, Antikensammlung, 3262, BA # 212316. Attractive youths playing lyres are also a feature of symposium scenes: see for example Berlin, Antikensammlung, F4059, BA # 3888; Paris, Musée du Louvre, G30, BA # 200071; London, British Museum, E159, BA # 200130; Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, V516, BA # 200528.

²¹⁹ Aischines described Misgolas as being fond of homosexual relationships (41) and adds that he also loved to be surrounded by kitharoidoi – singers accompanied by the lyre – and kitharistai – lyre players. Alexis (fr. 3) apparently refers to the same man: “Mother, I beg you, don’t threaten me with Misgolas! I’m no *kitharoidos*!” A play on words is used to mock the same man in Antiphanes fr. 26.12-18: “And who’ll be the first to buy this conger-eel, that’s grown a backbone thicker than Sinope’s? Misgolas doesn’t eat *them* at all. But here’s a dab (*kitharos*) – if he sees that, he won’t be able to keep his hands off it. People don’t realize how extraordinarily stuck he is on *kitharoidoi*.” In Euripides’ *Antiope*, the legendary kitharoidos Amphion is scolded by his brother, a farmer and warrior, for “flaunt[ing] an outward appearance that mimics a woman” (frg. 185) Kenneth J. Dover. *Greek Homosexuality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977. 73.

²²⁰ Kenneth J. Dover. *Greek Homosexuality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977. 172. Dover quotes Theocritus 15.64-6; Pl. Prt. 309a; Pl. Symp. 181d. The idea of women acting like men when pursuing boys and being attracted to the same sort of boys as are men has been further developed by David Konstan, “Women, Boys, and the Paradigm of Athenian Pederasty,” in *differences*, 13.2 (2002) pp. 35-56.

vases precisely because they play lyres, whose presence is thus hardly accidental. They signal the attractiveness of the depicted youth not only to the goddess but to the viewer; undoubtedly, one of the reasons for the popularity of pursuit scenes of all kinds was the opportunity to lovingly display a beautiful young body.²²¹ This would explain the close association of Nike and Eros, who are shown together, while Eros sometimes chases boys, even lyre-carrying boys, in the same way as do Nike and Eos.²²² (fig 2.108-2.109) Eos, Nike, and Eros thus serve as markers of the beauty of the youths they attend. This would also explain why these scenes of pursuit are sometimes paired with scenes of homosexual courtship, since their common focus would be the attractiveness of youth.²²³ Dover also pointed out the similarities of scenes of a winged goddess chasing a boy to scenes of Zeus chasing Ganymede or men pursuing boys.²²⁴ (fig. 2.110-2.111) The

²²¹ This has been pointed out, in the case of Eos, by Vermeule, *Aspects of Death*, 164. On the general sexual charge of male nudity in classical art, see Robin Osborne, "Men Without Clothes: Heroic Nakedness and Greek Art," *Gender & History*, 9.3 (1997). pp. 504-528.

²²² Nike and Eros in together: Orvieto, Museo Civico, Coll. Faina, 103, BA # 212852; Athens, National Museum, 1597, BA # 2082; Florence, Museo Archeologico Etrusco, 74355, BA # 217326; Texas, McCoy (formerly Northampton, Castle Ashby, 62), BA # 398. Eros chases a youth for example on Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, H26060, BA # 211715; Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, H2640, BA # 211707; San Simeon (CA), Hearst Historical State Monument, 10004, BA # 214539; Ferrara, Palazzo Schifanoia, 273, BA # 212721; Brussels, Musées Royaux, A72; London, British Museum, E397, BA # 215038; Athens, National Museum, CC1218, BA # 217335; Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, 779, BA # 340004.

²²³ London, British Museum, E72, BA # 211658; Sakai, Oka, BA # 211759 (Beazley, J.D., *Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters*, 2nd edition (Oxford, 1963), 892.8); Paris, Musée du Louvre, G278, BA # 204415.

²²⁴ Kenneth J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977. 172. For mythological similarities, see also Hyakinthos, holding a lyre, abducted by Zephyrus: Boston (MA), Museum of Fine Arts 13.94, BA # 9017565. For mortal men

similarity with the Ganymede scenes can be explained by the standardization of pursuit scenes, but it should be noted that Eos scenes are not merely parodies of male god pursuit scenes.

Hermes can parody Eos and her taste for lyre-playing youths.²²⁵ (fig. 2.212) On this amphora, Hermes chases with a comic bounding run after a youth holding a lyre. Even without the run, this scene is undoubtedly comic, since the youth, thanks to his lyre and association with Hermes, can be identified as Paris. Hermes was charged with explaining to Paris his task of awarding a prize to whichever goddess he chose as the most beautiful, and vases often show Paris holding a lyre when he is approached by Hermes.²²⁶ The amphora shows a Hermes who has been so impressed by the beauty of his charge that he chases him, intending homosexual relations, instead of leading him towards one of the most famous of all heterosexual liaisons, his affair with Helen. Hermes' bounding run is thus clearly here part of a comic iconography, functioning as a comic signal in the same way that it does in the Iris and Menelaos scenes.

The scenes with boy fleeing from an anonymous man may be more interesting, since they show an unwarrantedly panicked reaction of the boy to a relatively harmless-

courting boys with lyres, Dover's examples are Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, 37.26 and Cleveland (OH), Museum of Art, 24.197, BA # 206446; to these can be added Athens, National Museum, CC1176, BA # 202578; Basel, Markt, Munzen und Medaillen A.G (Beazley, J.D., *Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters*, 2nd edition (Oxford, 1963), 554.84); Bologna, Museo Civico Archeologico, PU278, BA # 205368; Florence, Museo Archeologico Etrusco, 91288, BA # 211754; New York (NY), Markt, Royal Athena, BA # 29016 (Eisenberg, J., *Art of the Ancient World*, Royal Athena, sale catalogue, 66 (1990) 20, NO.64); St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, 710, BA # 213864.

²²⁵ Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, 373, BA # 207545.

²²⁶ Anneliese Kossatz-Deissmann, *LIMC* (1994), s.v. "Paris Iudicium," 176-188.

looking man – in fact, the boy reacts as if the man were a winged goddess.²²⁷ (fig. 2.213)

If we consider that part of the humor of the pursuing goddess scenes is their placement of the goddess in the role of a mortal man, as seducer and lover of young boys, then these vases might be a sort of meta-parody, with a man substituted back into his role the goddess had usurped. Thus the reaction of the boy becomes comic, for he reacts as if the man were still a fearsome abductress.

It has thus been argued that scenes of winged goddesses pursuing boys, whatever the identity of the players, have comic overtones both because of the basic comicity, in the Greek mind, of a woman playing the active role, and because of interactions between different subjects and schema which make these scenes parodies and models for further parodies. It may not at first appear obvious how this interpretation might accord with the most sustained and well-known previous interpretation of vases of winged women abducting boys, that of Vermeule. She argued that myths of mortals abducted by immortals, whether male or female, were mythological metaphors for death.²²⁸ Eos is

²²⁷ London, British Museum, E214, BA # 214530 and Tampa (FL), Museum of Art, 86.84, BA # 207657.

²²⁸ For this discussion of Eos, see Vermeule, *Aspects of Death*, 162-167. She is mainly concerned with depictions of Eos holding boys, not pursuing them. That there is a difference between these schema, with the holding schema regarded as more dignified, is shown by the use of this arrangement for the akroteria, discussed above, with Eos holding Tithonos. Other interpretations focus on the use of the myth as a vehicle for understanding female desire: Robin Osborne, "Desiring Women on Athenian Pottery," in *Sexuality in Ancient Art: Near East, Egypt, Greece, and Italy*, ed. Natalie Boymel Kampen. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. pp. 65-80. Konstan, though, cautiously suggests that the image in Greek literature and art of an older woman caressing a young boy might be one of "maternal devotion [which] may represent, in part, the projection of a childhood fantasy on the part of Greek males". David Konstan, "Women, Boys, and the Paradigm of Athenian Pederasty," in *differences*, 13.2 (2002) pp. 35-56. 50.

particularly important in this theory, since, as the dawn-goddess, Vermeule argued that she signals the appearance of a new life as well as a new day, and also, because Greek funerals took place at night, the dawn marked the end of the formal mourning and Eos was believed to take away the newly-released soul of the dead.²²⁹ Such beliefs would not seem to fit with comic depictions of Eos, but there is a hint of this possibility in Vermeule's interpretation of the story of the aging of Tithonos as partly an expression of male concern about longevity and fading attractiveness, both in looks and performance.²³⁰ This should remind us that the characteristic feature of myths of Eos is not the death of her lover – since, after all, Kephalos and Orion have adventures after their affairs with Eos, and Tithonos is granted immortal life. Rather, the emphasis in these stories is on the loss of youth – so that Tithonos, unique among men and gods, loses his youth but not his life. Greek literature often complains of how fleeting is the beauty of a young man – a beauty that often proves irresistible for mortals and gods of both sexes. Perhaps the depredation of the winged goddess is a metaphor not for death, but for the loss of youth. This idea would fit with Greek characterizations of women who love adolescents as rivals with the men who are also attracted to them.²³¹ Thus, the winged goddess is in rivalry with mortal men for the youth of boys, but since she is a deity, she

²²⁹ Vermeule cites Herakleitos (F. Buffière, *Héraclite, Allégories d'Homère* (1962) 72 no. 68) and Artemidoros, *On Dreams* I.80: "If a man dreams of intercourse with a god or goddess it is a sign of death and being ready to leave his earthly body."

²³⁰ Vermeule, *Aspects of Death*, 164.

²³¹ For discussion of this rivalry, see David Konstan, "Women, Boys, and the Paradigm of Athenian Pederasty," in *differences*, 13.2 (2002) pp. 35-56. 40-41. He cites as examples of wives and their husbands in love with the same boy Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 9.28 and Iamblichus, *Babylonica* (Hambrich 27-29).

will always win. On a deeper level, then, the vases eulogize the beauty of youth, while at the same time humanizing the forces that steal it – for how can they be blamed for taking a prize so highly desirable to all who see it? It is interesting to consider in this connection the other common appearance of Eos on Greek vases, in scenes in which she carries her dead son Memnon away from the Trojan battlefield.²³² Vernant has argued that myths of deities caring for the bodies of heroes serve as mythological reassurances for the Greek hoplite that his body, too, would be cared for after death, given proper burial and not subjected to the outrages of enemies or animals.²³³ One of the prime beauties of the dead hero was his youth, and the protection of this appearance was the main task of the deities charged with the care of his body.²³⁴ If Eos, then, takes care of her son Memnon and his heroic, youthful beauty by flying away with him, perhaps, too, her abduction of Tithonos and his ilk is another version of her involvement in the celebration of the beauty of youth - and its disappearance into better custody.

The Perpetual Problem of Identifying Humor

I have used the tests discussed above to identify and analyze the examples of Greek vase-painting that I will discuss in the rest of the dissertation, but I wish to stress

²³² The visual parallels between these scenes have been noted by Carina Weiss, LIMC III (1986), s.v. “Eos” 783-84, nos. 321-24.

²³³ Jean Pierre Vernant, “A ‘Beautiful Death’ and the Disfigured Corpse in Homeric Epic,” in *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays*, ed. F. Zeitlin. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991. For the practicalities of death in battle, see Pamela Vaughn, “The Identification and Retrieval of the Hoplite Battle-dead,” in *Hoplites: The Classical Greek Battle Experience*, ed. M.H. Hanson. New York: Routledge, 1991. pp. 38-62.

²³⁴ Jean Pierre Vernant, “A ‘Beautiful Death’ and the Disfigured Corpse in Homeric Epic,” in *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays*, ed. F. Zeitlin. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.

that these tests are not exhaustive. No test for identifying humor can be fool-proof, especially when it comes to identifying subtle parodies. A contemporary example will make this clear. A German art collective, interDuck, has recently been producing versions of famous artworks.²³⁵ These are fairly faithful reproductions, except that they insert Walt Disney cartoon characters in the place of the works' former subject. (fig. 2.214-2.215) The works are exhibited in art museums, interspersed with the permanent collections. Here, the tests of genre and comparison fail. The “genre” of the museum would normally provide the visitor clues about what sort of art she is viewing, but these exhibitions are able to camouflage, for instance, a plaster cast of a duck-billed version of the Juno Ludovisi in the actual Cast Gallery of a museum. (fig. 2.214) Comparisons are also difficult, since these parodies look very similar to the originals – see their version of a well-known image by the Amasis Painter of Dionysos with a pair of intertwined maenads who dance, holding a hare – here, instead, they hold a protesting Donald Duck.²³⁶ (fig. 2.215-2.216) If we use the strategy of comparison, are we to understand the Greek vase as humorous, like the modern image, or the modern image as serious, just like the other? Of course, we do not actually face such problems, since we know who Donald Duck is, and that his type of art does not belong in the same category as the vase does – we are an audience able to understand the concision of the joke. Our perception of these parodies as humorous thus heavily depends on our cultural knowledge – imagine our difficulties if we had never seen a modern cartoon. We might think the duck-billed

²³⁵ The catalogue is *Die Duckomenta*. Berlin: Nicolai Verlag, 2003.

²³⁶ The original Amasis Painter vase is Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, 222.

plaster cast authentic – the record of an ancient statue, since its style is remarkably consistent with that of the period it parodies.

Defining Humor

Theorists have tried to define humor or the comic or to analyze the cause of laughter. I regard these attempts as just as attainable as would be a definition of the serious or an analysis of the cause of weeping.

Existing theories about humor also tend to date fairly quickly, since the relation of these theories to contemporary concerns is unmistakable. Witness Bergson, defining humor at the turn of the 20th century as “something mechanical encrusted upon the living” – a definition much influenced by industrialism’s then increasing mechanicalization of all life.²³⁷ Or Gombrich and Kris’ *Caricature*, with its basis in Gestalt psychology.²³⁸ Smadja’s collection of many more theories about laughter show that they, as well, show characteristic types of explanations of laughter and humor in different eras.²³⁹

I will work on a much smaller scale – not defining humor or visual humor or even Greek visual humor, but rather discussing the uses of humor on certain works in certain circumstances. Thus, I will treat humor not as something discrete, but rather as a *technique* that contributes to the creation of a whole work, akin to the techniques of

²³⁷ Henri Bergson, “Le Rire: Essai sur la Signification du Comique.” Published in three parts in *Revue de Paris* (1 February, 15 February, and 1 March, 1900).

²³⁸ E.H. Gombrich and E. Kris, *Caricature*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1940.

²³⁹ Smadja’s types of laughter-theory are, chronologically: moral, intellectual, psychophysiological and social. See Eric Smadja, *Le Rire*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1993.

drawing in pencil or literary allegory or *coloratura*. Techniques such as these contribute to the meaning of a work, and are often used in the creation of groups of works with similar meaning, but I do not think that they have separate meanings or standard definitions of their own. Think how fundamentally the same in technique and yet how different in meaning is a “double-take” performed on the vaudeville stage and in a horror movie.

Thus, this dissertation is not about the meaning of ancient visual humor. Rather, it began by identifying some of the characteristic markers of the technique of humor in Greek visual art. Now, it moves to determining the cultural role of some examples of works featuring humor.

The role of parody and humor in Greek visual art deserves more study, but even the short survey in this chapter shows that the humor of the imagery of the Kabirion, Anthesteria, and Sam Wide vases is not, in itself, their most distinguishing feature. What is strange to the modern viewer about them is their use of humor at the expense of the gods during religious festivals. The specifics of this type of humor – its nature and uses – are what will concern us now.

The next two chapters of this dissertation lay out the information we possess about the appearance, contexts, and uses of Kabirion, Anthesteria, and Sam Wide vases. This information will show that the vases pass my tests for humor. Yet, much of the following archeological and textual material is difficult to interpret, and sorting out its interpretation will take some time.

Once this is done, we will see that surviving information presents intriguing suggestions but no easy answers to questions about the images. Thus, in the remaining chapters I will propose other ways to complete our interpretation of these vases.

Kabirion Ware

The first and largest set of images under consideration were painted on cups found in a sanctuary in Boeotia, a few kilometers away from ancient Thebes.²⁴⁰ Both textual and archeological evidence identifies the deities of this sanctuary as the “Kabirioi,” though just who these Kabirioi were is unclear. (See Appendix 3.)

The so-called “Kabirion ware” consists of a series of black-figure cups with characteristic subjects painted in a distinctive figural style: an archaizing black-figure with much use of incision and thick, hasty brushstrokes.²⁴¹ The cups were probably made for the sanctuary by a local workshop or workshops. Their style is a natural development from Boeotian archaic vase-painting, especially archaic Boeotian komast vases, whose celebrating figures – exaggerated bodies rendered in broad, quick strokes - surely guided the Kabirion painters.²⁴² (fig. 3.1) Their forms also have parallels in Attic painting.²⁴³

²⁴⁰ All the existing scenes with possible mythological interpretations are included in Appendix I, as are expanded discussions, with bibliography and illustrations of the model iconographies, of the vases mentioned here.

²⁴¹ For the coining of this name and a discussion of the form of the kantharoi, see *KH* I, 105ff.

²⁴² Kilinski has written about the place of Kabirion ware within the history of Boeotian vase-painting, as a natural development from archaic Boeotian pottery. Karl Kilinski II, *Boeotian Black-Figure Vase-Painting of the Archaic Period*. Mainz am Rhein: Von Zabern, 1990. 37, 41-42. Especially important was the influence of archaic Boeotian komast vases, whose celebrating figures surely guided the Kabirion painters. On these vases, see Karl Kilinski II, “The Boeotian Dancers Group,” *AJA* 82.2 (1978), pp. 173-191. 173; *Boeotian Black-Figure Vase-Painting of the Archaic Period*. Mainz am Rhein: Von Zabern, 1990. 44-45; A.D. Ure, “Boeotian Geometricising Vases,” *JHS*, 49.2 (1929), pp. 160-171. 160; A.D. Ure, “More Boeotian Geometricising Vases,” *JHS*, 55.2 (1935), pp. 225-228. 227; Tyler Jo Smith, “Dancing Spaces and Dining Places: Archaic Komasts at the Symposium,” in *Periplous: Papers on Classical Art and Archaeology Presented to Sir John Boardman*. ed. G. R. Tsetskhladze, A. J. N. W. Prag, and A. M. Snodgrass. London: Thames & Hudson, 2000. pp. 309-319. Various examples of Kabirion ware are

Wolters and Bruns point out the comparable nature of the work of the Beldam Painter and the painter of Berlin 3186, as well as the style and subject of the polychrome oinochoe from c. 400 BCE found in the Athenian Agora.²⁴⁴ (fig. 3.2-3.3) Attic vase painters rarely made works in such a broad caricature graphic style, but these examples, as well as the polychrome Anthesteria vases I will discuss in the next chapter, show the essential similarities of Boeotian and Attic comic visual style.

The vases have a limited variety of scenes. Most can be linked to the festival atmosphere of the sanctuary: sacrifices, processions, symposia and general celebration.²⁴⁵ (fig. 3.4-3.6) There are also more decorative motifs - floral patterns, animals – and scenes

compared to the work of other Theban painters by: A.D. Ure, "Some Provincial Black-figure Workshops," *Annual of the British School at Athens*, 41 (1940-45), pp. 22-28. 24-25; and A.D. Ure, *AJA* 1953, p. 249 and A. D. Ure, "Koes," *JHS*, 71 (1951), 194-197.

²⁴³ The question of the relation between Boeotian painters, both in general and those of the Kabirion, and their Attic models, has been the subject of much scholarly discussion. The relationship between various specific scenes on Kabirion vases and Attic precedents is discussed in detail in this chapter and in Appendix 1. For general discussions of the relation between Boeotian and Attic vase-painting, see Ghazi-Kahil, *BCH* 1950, vol 74, 52ff; Lullies, *AM*, 1940, vol. 65, 1-27; and Charlotte Schaffer, "Boeotian Festival Scenes: Competition, Consumption and Cult in Archaic Black Figure," in *The Iconography of Greek Cult in the Archaic and Classical Periods*, ed. Robin Hägg. Athens and Liège: Centre d'Etude de la Religion Greque Antique, 1992. pp.117-141.

²⁴⁴ Wolters and Bruns, *Kabirenheiligtum, Vol I*, 126. Beldam: Athens, National Museum, 1129. Berlin: Berlin, Antikensammlung, 3186, BA # 12551. Polychrome oinochoe: Athens, Agora P23907; *Hesperia* 29 (1960), 279, nr. B 4, pl. 65; Trendall, *PV* 24 nr. 12.

²⁴⁵ no. 289 (Athens, NM, 424); no. 290 (Athens, NM 426); no. 292 (Athens, NM 427); no. 358 (Berlin, Staatliche Mus., 3286); no. 291 (Athens, NM 425). Schachter is of the opinion that all the vases show the events leading up to and following initiation: Schachter, "Evolutions of a Mystery Cult," 132.

unrelated to religious ritual – hunting, athletics.²⁴⁶ (fig. 3.9-3.11) Satyrs and maenads also commonly appear, and satyrs even dance with mortal men.²⁴⁷ (fig. 3.12)

Though the graphic style is fairly constant on all Kabirion ware, the characterization of figures differs. Some examples are executed in a refined style, the Kabirios and Pais fragment being the best example. The majority of the Kabirion scenes are in a caricatural style, giving their figures skinny, bent limbs, fat bellies, distorted features, and generally comic appearances. Other scenes are painted in a hurried manner, making it difficult to decide whether their figures are distorted through caricature or lack of skill (for example, fig. 3.13).²⁴⁸ The following discussions of vases will only identify scenes as caricatural if they display obvious distortions of the body along the lines summarized above.

From their stylistic similarities, it was always clear that these vases were produced in a relatively short period by a limited number of hands. Wolters and Bruns named these painters, in order of production, the Kabirios Painter, the Mystes Painter, and the Satyr Painter. The dating of their products has been controversial. When first excavated, their use of black-figure and sometimes crude representational style made them appear to belong to the archaic period, but Wolters and Bruns, in their official publication, noted that some Kabirion vases were found in the Polyandrion of Thespieae.

²⁴⁶ no. 388 (Karlsruhe, Badisches Landesmuseum, B 2596, BA # 12507); no. 381 (Göttingen, Archäolog. Institut, 5406); no. 355 (Berlin, Staatliche Mus., 3179).

²⁴⁷ no. 296 (Athens, NM 545). The combination of satyrs and mortals within the same scene is rare on Attic vases; for an exception, see, Würzburg, HA 166a, discussed by Lissarrague, *Aesthetics of the Greek Banquet*, 36-37.

²⁴⁸ no. S17 (coll. Lambros).

These vases, which they considered on stylistic grounds as coming from near the end of the production of the series, they thus dated to c. 400-380 BCE.²⁴⁹ Wolters and Bruns considered the fine fragment with Kabirios and Pais to come from the beginning of the series, and dated it to c. 440 BCE, concluding that most of the figured vases were painted c. 440-420 BCE.²⁵⁰

The most recent analysis of the dating evidence is that of Mitchell, who argues that the Kabirion vases were found in the earlier of two pyres at the Thespian Polyandrion, and thus should be dated to c. 425 BCE; he concludes that production began in the 450s and ended in the late 4th c. BCE, with the figured kantharoi painted c. 450-375 BCE.²⁵¹ I will adopt Mitchell's dating.²⁵²

²⁴⁹ For the history of these dating arguments, see *KH* IV, 2-4. The vases found on the Polyandrion of Thespieae are nr. 413-415.

²⁵⁰ With some merely patterned ware c. 420-400, and some lesser quality work from c. 400-350 BCE. For this dating, see Wolters and Bruns, *Kabirenheiligtum*, Vol 1, 95-128. This dating was disputed by those who noticed similarities between the Kabirion vases and the Hadra vases produced at Alexandria: Rudolf Pagenstecher, "Dated Sepulchral Vases from Alexandria," *AJA*, 13.4 (1909), pp. 387-416. 390.

²⁵¹ Mitchell, *Comic Pictures in Greek Vase-Painting*, 159. Mitchell is thus in agreement with Schachter, who dates the end of the manufacture of figured Kabirion vases to the third quarter of 4th c. BCE. Albert Schachter, "Evolutions of a Mystery Cult: The Theban Kabiroi," in M. B. Cosmopoulos, ed., *Greek Mysteries: The Archaeology of Ancient Greek Secret Cults*. London and New York: Routledge, 2002. pp. 112-142. 128.

²⁵² The only substantial opponent to this dating is Braun, who dates the production much later, with the majority of the Kabirion vases placed in the 4th c. BCE, with some late pieces in the 3rd c. BCE: for this discussion, see *KH* IV, 230-33. Her dating is the result of comparisons of the style and subject-matter of the Kabirion vases to South Italian wares. She compares one fragment, no. 99 (Bryn Mawr, Ella Riegel Memorial Mus, P94), to two South Italian vases, one in Dublin (Dublin 420-1800; Trendall, *LCS* 695) and another, a skyphoid pyxis, in Basel (Basel, private coll.; frontispiece of Trendall, *LCS* II). In her brief catalogue entries, Braun does not explain why she chose the comparative vases, but here it must be the similarities in wavy hair and relatively bulky shoulder muscles shared by both the Kabirion figure and the South Italian figures. The appearance of the hair is

The most unique Kabirion images are those which present scenes from myth, parodying the action through their grotesque depictions of mythological heroes.²⁵³ The audience as well as the painters must have had a working knowledge of vase iconography, since the majority of the scenes lack inscriptions to identify their protagonists.

This type of mythological parody is very evident on a cup with a scene of the Judgment of Paris.²⁵⁴ (fig. 3.14) Here, a grotesque male Paris plays a lyre; by his head is

similar. The difference in technique undercuts this similarity in appearance, since on the Kabirion vase, the hair is rendered by incision, and on the South Italian vases, by lines of paint. Braun also compares no. 105 to the Campanian Pilos Head Group, in particular, to a vase in Braunschweig. (Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum, 666, BA # 1001969.) For the Pilos Head Group, see Trendall, *LCS* 267-274, nr. 270-326. The reasons for Braun's comparison are unclear, since neither the pilos nor this posture is rare, and both can be paralleled in Attic art, for example a skyphos in Chiusi from c. 450-400 BCE. (Chiusi, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, P489, BA # 7181.) A particularly far-reaching comparison is made between no. 100 and a Campanian bell-krater in London. (London, British Museum, F190, BA # 425131: Trendall, *LCS* 166.3.) It is difficult even to make out the subject of this Kabirion fragment, and even if it is, as Braun suggests, a satyr with his arm upraised, there is little reason to assign him to such an elaborate scene. It is much more likely that, like the other satyrs on Kabirion vases, he is simply dancing. A last sample comparison is between the Kabirion fragment no. 103 and several South Italian vases. (S.M. Capua Vetere 77: Trendall, *LCS*, 175.1; Leningrad 3007: Trendall, *LCS*, 176.3; St. Louis W.U. 3269: Trendall, *LCS*, 180.3.) The basis of comparison here seems to be the extra swath of material around the waist of the Kabirion figure and the figures in the South Italian vases. The similarity is misleading, since both arms of the South Italian figures are visible, but only one for the Kabirion figure. It seems that he has thrust his other arm into his clothing, thus creating the extra bulk, while the South Italian figures are wearing an actually different style of drapery. In all, Braun's comparisons with South Italian productions are debatable. As will be seen during the discussion of individual vases, the Kabirion painters paid close attention to Attic iconographies, even when these iconographies were parodied. When the Kabirion scenes are similar to South Italian scenes, it is only when the South Italian painters did not deviate from Attic models. Braun's late dating thus seems implausible.

²⁵³ All the existing scenes with possible mythological interpretations are included in Appendix I.

²⁵⁴ no. 366 (Boston, MFA, 99533).

written an *alpha*, for Alexandros. Dressed in Oriental costume, with a pointed Phrygian hat, he sits on a round rock, facing two grotesque female figures with pug noses and open mouths, also sitting on rocks, each holding the ends of a stick with one hand and gesturing with the other. The left-most woman holds out two fingers, the other her whole hand. Wolters and Bruns identified the action of the women holding the stick as a game of *morra* (Latin: *micare digitis*).²⁵⁵ (fig. 3.15) The game is still played in southern Italy: two partners make a fist behind their backs and, at a given signal, extend their hands, displaying a number of fingers. The first player to call out the total number of fingers wins the round, and advances their hold on the stick, progressing hand-over-hand to the center. Beyond them stands a naked, grotesque Hermes, gesturing with his caduceus towards two more female figures seated on rocks. These are Hera (labeled) wearing a veil, holding a scepter, and with a frontal, grotesque face. The other is a somewhat grotesque female, holding a garland and nude to the waist, and thus recognizable as Aphrodite. Since it seems likely that the whole-hand gesture of the right-hand *morra*-player is a gesture of triumph at having won a round, and this, in combination with her veil and greater grotesqueness than her fellow, may well mark her as the last member of the judged triad, the goddess Athena. The humor of the parody lies in the unsightliness of

²⁵⁵ Figure: A. Baumeister, *Denkmäler des klassischen Altertums zur erläuterung des Lebens der Griechen und Römer in Religion, kunst und sitte*. Munich and Leipzig: R. Oldenbourg, 1885-1888. fig. 997. Other discussions of the representations of and significance of *morra* include: Adolf Greifenhagen, *Griechische Enoten*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1957. 51, 78; Herbert A. Cahn, "Morra: Drei Silene beim Knobeln," in *Kotinos, Festschrift für Erika Simon*. ed. Heide Froning, Tonio Hölscher, and Harold Mielsch. Mainz: P. von Zabern, 1992. pp. 214-17; Herbert Hoffman, *Sotades: Symbols of Immortality on Greek Vases*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997. 142. Wolters and Bruns proposed that *morra* was appropriate to the scene because it was associated with Phrygia – see Roscher, *Myth Lex* III I, 1610.16.

all the entrants of this contest of beauty. Even Paris, so mythically handsome, has been turned into an ugly grotesque; what is more, he appears to be singing with a wide-open mouth, accompanying himself on the lyre, thus showing himself completely unaware of the surrounding deities. Of the goddesses, Aphrodite has suffered the least mockery (unless we are to make something of her close association with Hermes). Hera's frontal face makes her even uglier than the usual caricature. If the *morra*-player is Athena, the joke is rather inspired, for it turns her skills as the goddess of wisdom to the not-very-impressive task of competitively counting fingers, and also makes her, like Paris, appear unaware of the narrative in which they find themselves.²⁵⁶ Other *morra* scenes feature fluttering erotes, suggesting that *morra* may have had erotic connotations for the Greeks. This connotation would heighten the joke of the ugly, unerotic Athena.

Several other Kabirion scenes have characters who seem to show themselves unaware of the proper use of their attributes or the normal course of their mythological story; for example, a somewhat fragmentary scene of Bellerophon with Pegasus and the Chimera in which Bellerophon leads Pegasus towards the monster.²⁵⁷ (fig. 3.16) Previous scholars have thought that the scene depicts a terrified and reluctant Pegasus, dragged by the reins towards the Chimera by Bellerophon, but there are several problems with this interpretation. First is the reading of Pegasus' emotional state. The winged horse of the other Kabirion kantharos demonstrates that here, as indeed in the Greek iconography of horses in general, rearing front legs indicate eager forward motion, not hesitation. Second

²⁵⁶ Helene Foley suggests that this game could be a parody of Athena's warlike, competitive nature. Personal communication.

²⁵⁷ no. 324 (Athens, National Museum, 10530, BA # 31428).

is the problem of determining what, exactly, Bellerophon is holding. A line seems to represent the reins falling from Pegasus' muzzle, but this line is drawn towards Bellerophon's waist. What he holds in his rear hand is another, straight and stiff object, not the reins. By analogy with Attic iconography, it would seem that this object is a pole or club – Bellerophon is concentrating on it, not Pegasus. Pegasus is drawn and characterized in the same non-grotesque manner as the Chimera; it is Bellerophon who is the sole grotesque member of the ensemble. That he has dismounted is probably another deliberate comic change, in order to show Bellerophon as dim-wittedly disregarding the powerful assistance offered by Pegasus. The joke of Bellerophon's grotesqueness is emphasized both by the contrast with the non-grotesque animals, and also by a contrast of sizes – for how is Pegasus to carry him? The similar joke, beloved of circuses, of a large clown in a tiny car, is of the same genre.

A similar failure of a Kabirion hero to recognize danger is displayed in a scene of a grotesque male, leaning on a stick, calmly facing a grotesque female figure who gestures towards him with her far hand while a large pig rushes from her towards him, its front feet flung out and its snout upturned.²⁵⁸ (fig. 3.17) Though the scene has always been identified as showing the confrontation of Odysseus and Kirke, it should rather be interpreted as the encounter of Theseus with the Krommyonian Sow.²⁵⁹ In the Attic iconography, Theseus stands to one side, usually the left, preparing with a sword or spear

²⁵⁸ no. 363 (Bonn, Akademisches Kunstmus., 1768).

²⁵⁹ Identification as Odysseus and Kirke: *KHI*, K 18; LIMC s.v. "Kirke" 28; A. D. Ure and P.N. Ure, "Boeotian Vases in the Akademisches Kunstmuseum in Bonn, *AA*, 48 (1933), pp. 2-42. 25-26; Chr. Grunwald, *Antiken aus dem Akademischen Kunstmuseum Bonn*, vol. II. Düsseldorf: Rheinland-Verl., 1971. 128.

to meet the attack of the sow, which rushes towards him, hooves and snout eagerly uplifted. Its aged female mistress raises her far hand to her cheek in distress while stretching out her far hand, either urging on the sow or supplicating Theseus.²⁶⁰ (fig. 3.18-3.21) The Kabirion vase, while closely following the positions, postures, and gestures of the old woman and her sow, has changed Theseus from a handsome, brave ephebe into a grotesquely ugly figure who, leaning on his staff, either fails to recognize his danger or refuses to participate in the narrative.

Other scenes use small details to suggest a great change in the character of a mythological personage. This is true of a scene which is generally interpreted as Achilles presented to Chiron.²⁶¹ (fig. 3.22) This grotesque Chiron, with an undersized horse-body, puny limbs, oversized head, large mouth and eyes, holds a leafy branch over his shoulder with one hand and has walking-stick in the other. He converses with the central figure, an extremely grotesque draped man. At the far right stands a less grotesque draped male figure. The central figure has usually, because of his greater size, been identified as Peleus, but a comparison with the Bellerophon burlesque scene shows that the Kabirion

²⁶⁰ For example on Madrid, Museo Arqueologico Nacional, L196, BA # 215557; London, British Museum, E84, BA # 217213; London, British Museum, 1843.11-3.13, BA # 205091; and Basel, Antikenmuseum und Sammlung Ludwig, BS416, BA # 276099.

²⁶¹ no. 399 (London, BM, B77). For this interpretation of the figures, see Paul V.C. Baur, *Centaurs in Ancient Art: The Archaic Period*. Berlin: K. Curtius, 1912. 61 no. 167; K. Friis Johansen, "Achill bei Chiron," in *Dragma*, Martino P. Nilsson. Lund: H. Ohlsson, 1939. pp. 181-205. 204-205; Birgitt Schiffler, *Die Typologie des Kentauren in der antiken Kunst: vom 10. bis zum Ende d. 4. Jhs. v. Chr.* Frankfurt and Bern: Lang, 1976. 276 no. B6; T. B. L. Webster. *Monuments Illustrating Old and Middle Comedy*. London: Institute of Classical Studies, 1978. 19; Alexandre G. Mitchell. *Comic Pictures in Greek Vase-Painting: Humour in the Polis and the Dionysian World, in the Sixth and the Fifth Centuries B.C.* Thesis for D.Phil, School of Archeology, Oxford. Trinity Term, 2002. 169-170.

painters used size to indicate a leading role, so perhaps this central figure is actually Achilles. This would accord with the invariant central placement of Achilles in the Attic scenes. In either case, whether the central or the right-hand figure, the Achilles here has been advanced in age by the painter; surely the joke is that he should no longer have need of a tutor. The other major change was to give Chiron a walking-stick; this was rather an inspired idea, as this civilized stick contradicts his usual accessory in Attic scenes, the uncivilized branch over his shoulder, and makes clear his uncomfortable position between two worlds.²⁶² (fig. 3.23) An Apulian phylax vase, c. 380-370 BCE, also features a comic Chiron.²⁶³ (fig. 3.24) This makes obvious the many differences between the comic styles of the phylax vases and the Kabirion scenes. The South Italian vase makes no reference to the usual Attic iconography of the scene; indeed, we would not know Chiron if he were not labeled as such. The moment shown has an air of slapstick – the reluctant journey of an old creature – but has nothing to do with the main narrative points of the myth. The Kabirion scene, by contrast, scores its comic points by ringing changes on tradition of the representation of this scene in Attic vase-painting.

Another scene in which small details are important is that which parodies two episodes from the destruction of Troy.²⁶⁴ (fig. 3.25) On the left, a woman has fallen on her knees before a herm, elevated on a stepped platform. She looks back and stretches out a supplicating hand towards a somewhat grotesque male figure with an erect phallus, who wears a helmet and wields a sword. The right-hand couple is composed of a fleeing

²⁶² For example, in Paris, Musée du Louvre, G3, BA # 200435.

²⁶³ London, BM, F151.

²⁶⁴ no. 390 (Kassel, Staatliche Kunstslg, Leihgabe Slg. Ludwig, Aachen).

woman, also with a turned-back head, whose hand meets the hand of another naked warrior; he, too, is equipped with a helmet and a sword, and is somewhat grotesque. On the far right is another, smaller herm. The couples are evidently Ajax assaulting Cassandra and Menelaos recovering Helen. Obviously, lust was the motivating force for the rape of Cassandra, but Attic painters indicate Ajax's desire only metaphorically, as on the well-known vase in Naples, c. 480 BCE, with a meaningfully positioned sword.²⁶⁵ (fig. 3.26) In the Kabirion scene, Ajax's sword is drawn behind his body, and thus, instead of being merely a hinted indication of his penis, it appears at the same time as if his erection is a continuation of his sword and that he thrusts the sword into his own anus. The Kabirion painter seems thus to have well understood the Attic link of sword and phallos. It is difficult to be certain whether Ajax's nudity is the result of the painter's knowledge of one of the Attic examples which show him so, but, since the body of Cassandra is uniformly exposed in the Attic iconography, it may be that the Kabirion vase, by making her clothed and Ajax nude, is executing a comic reversal; the same may be true of the clothed Helen and nude Menelaos.²⁶⁶ The changes made to the Menelaos and Helen pair are also of the slap-stick variety, for the painter has turned her around, so that she flees towards, instead of away from, Menelaos, and both seem to be in a panic, though they already touch hands in the traditional spousal gesture. Another change is made to the physical surroundings: for the mythological statue of Athena and altar, at

²⁶⁵ Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, H2422, BA # 201724.

²⁶⁶ The term "comic reversal" is a modern one, but the phenomenon it describes it by no means confined to modern comedy. The substitution of a thing for its opposite – a person, an accessory, an event – is common to most human humor. The specific idea of carnivalesque reversals will be discussed later in this dissertation.

which Cassandra and Helen respectively take refuge, the painter has substituted herms – crude objects instead of the dignified accessories of a great city’s worship. As well, the herms lack genitals – another inversion, which deprives the statutes of their customary erect members while granting them to the usually calm heroes. These small but significant changes are much more responsible for the burlesque quality of the work than is the relatively slight grotesqueness of the figure’s bodies.

Another example of thorough changes to the character of a hero is the treatment of Odysseus by the Kabirion painters. There are at least three surviving scenes of the confrontation of Odysseus and Kirke, and another of Odysseus traveling. The first Kirke scene shows her handing a cup to a partially-clothed, kneeling, grotesque Odysseus.²⁶⁷ (fig. 3.27) In the second example, she, labeled “Kirke” in the Boeotian alphabet, hands an exaggeratedly large cup to a bearded Odysseus, who leans on a staff, wears a traveler’s cap and a sword, and is naked except for a small cloak wrapped around his shoulders.²⁶⁸ (fig. 3.28) He gestures with his hands, as if in conversation. The rightmost figure in the scene is evidently one of Odysseus’ companions; having consumed Kirke’s potion, his head has turned into that of a pig, while the rest of his body, though it crouches animal-like on the ground, is still human. In the third, a grotesque Odysseus (frontal face, large eyes, gaping mouth, puny limbs, large, protruding belly) wearing a traveler’s cap and naked except for a small cloak wrapped around his shoulders, gestures with his sword and scabbard, his legs in an undignified and unbalanced spread.²⁶⁹ (fig. 3.29) He seems to

²⁶⁷ no. 402 (Mississippi, University of Mississippi P116).

²⁶⁸ no. 398 (London, British Museum, 93.3-3.1).

²⁶⁹ Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, G249, BA # 680002 (no inv. no. assigned in *KH* IV).

be advancing towards Kirke, who holds up a drinking cup, stirring its contents with a thin stick or wand. A loom stands in the background of all three of these scenes. The parodic details are many. Kirke is turned into an ugly crone, quite different from the attractive goddess of the *Odyssey*, while Odysseus himself is transformed from a brave warrior into someone who appears feeble in both mind and body. The change in posture of the companion in the London vase is similar, for, though he has a pig's head on a man's body, similar to the Attic examples, here he crouches on the ground, careless of his dignity, unlike the transformed companions on the Attic vases, who maintain an upright, human posture.²⁷⁰ (fig. 3.30) Odysseus' kneeling posture in one scene is quite interesting. On Attic vases, warriors often kneel in display or ambush, while revelers also kneel, sometimes in front of a krater, similar to Odysseus' kneeling before Kirke's cup, but in all of these examples, the kneeler puts only one knee to the ground.²⁷¹ (fig. 3.31-3.32) Odysseus' posture, with both knees touching the ground, is close to representations of servants kneeling before their masters or mourners kneeling before grave-markers.²⁷² (fig. 3.33-3.34) Here, Odysseus' posture is evidently meant to show his servant-like humility. In the *Odyssey*, it is Kirke who kneels, beseeching Odysseus' mercy when he threatens

²⁷⁰ For example, on Taranto, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, 9125, BA # 340780.

²⁷¹ Warriors kneel, for example, on Basel, Antikenmuseum und Sammlung Ludwig, BS472, BA # 9919 and Florence, Museo Archeologico Etrusco, PD250, BA # 275967. Revelers: see Malibu (CA), The J. Paul Getty Museum, 86.AE.283, BA # 45426 and Basel, Antikenmuseum und Sammlung Ludwig, BS440, BA # 203338.

²⁷² Kneeling servants: Chiusi, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, 1831, BA # 216789 and Berlin, Antikensammlung, F1855, BA # 320060. Kneeling mourners: Leipzig, Antikenmuseum d. Universität Leipzig, T3379, BA # 217770.

her with his sword. By making Odysseus kneel, the Kabirion painter reverses this relationship, portraying Odysseus as the weaker party, and even perhaps as the one desirous of a favor. What this favor might be seems to be suggested by another change made by the Kabirion painters, this time in Kirke's cup. This cup is of a normal size in the Attic scenes, but ranges from over-size to extremely large in the Kabirion examples. Perhaps we are to imagine that the caricatured Odysseus, instead of seeking to rescue his companions, is desirous of Kirke's wine, adulterated or not. Such an interpretation would also account for Odysseus' conversational posture on the Oxford vase, where he negotiates with Kirke instead of threatening her. To make Odysseus into such a desperate imbibor is to employ an interesting burlesque tactic, that of removing a distinguishing narrative quality of an object in order to exploit its more comic every-day connotations. That is, while in the Homeric story, Kirke's potion is wine, its importance lies in its additional, magical qualities – its ability to transform men into animals. The Kabirion burlesques ignore these magical powers, emphasizing instead the wine's underlying, alcoholic nature, thus assimilating Odysseus to the many comic creations – satyrs and slaves in particular – who cannot drink enough of it, heedless of the result. Of course, Odysseus himself was often a character in comic poetry, and some fragments of comedies hint that literature also showed Odysseus distracted from his heroic duties, such as rescuing his companions from the Cyclops, by wine.²⁷³ As well, the fragments of

²⁷³ The fragments of Odysseus' appearances in comic literature are discussed by E. D. Phillips, "The Comic Odysseus," *Greece & Rome*, 6.1 (1959), pp. 58-67. See also W. B. Stanford, "Studies in the Characterization of Ulysses," *Hermathena* (1949-55), especially "I. The Denigration of Odysseus," *Hermathena* (1949), pp. 34-36. Jokes about drinking feature in the fragments of Euripides' *Cyclops* as well as the few fragments of Epicharmos' play of the same name, on which see Phillips, "The Comic Odysseus," 61.

Epicharmos' *Sirens* indicate that the comic hero was strongly tempted by siren-songs about "roasting plump anchovies and sucking-pigs' meat and cuttlefish, and drinking sweet wine on top of it."²⁷⁴

One other difference also contributes to the de-mystification of the scene: the inclusion of the loom. Homer's account does place Kirke at the loom upon the first approach of Odysseus' companions, but no Attic representations of Kirke include it. There are looms in Attic vase-painting, but they occur exclusively in domestic scenes of mortal women.²⁷⁵ Though the Greeks frequently described their goddesses as adepts at or

²⁷⁴ In another fragment, the Sirens describe their evening meal: "There was one fat red mullet, and two tunnies sliced through the middle, and as many pigeons and scorpion-fish." Phillips comments that "Odysseus suffers, not from unfathomable enchantment, but from plain gluttony unsatisfied in a fairyland of dainties." For these fragments, see Phillips, "The Comic Odysseus," 62. The same offers of banquets by the Sirens seem to have been part of Theopompos' *Sirens* - see Phillips, "The Comic Odysseus," 65 - as well as Nikophon's *Sirens*, where someone says "Let it snow barley and shower down loaves and rain soup, let meat-broth roll through the streets and cake call us to eat itself," and, in another fragment, "Let the sausage fight with the relish for a seat." Phillips, "The Comic Odysseus," 66. Kratinos' comic play about the Cyclops also featured the humor of gourmandizing heros, with the Cyclops announcing to Odysseus and his companions that "you sit there feeding on white milk, taking your portion of beestings and filling yourselves with beestings-pudding. Therefore I shall seize all of you 'dear companions' and roast you, boil you, and broil you on coals, dip you in brine and in vinegar-and-brine sauce and then in pickle of brine and garlic, and whichever of you seems the most tasty, I shall chew up, you warriors!" Phillips, "The Comic Odysseus," 64.

²⁷⁵ Attic domestic scenes with looms (some free-standing, some hand looms): Athens, National Museum, 2179, BA # 865; London, British Museum, 1907.5-19.1, BA # 1907.5-19.1; Cambridge (MA), Harvard Univ., Arthur M. Sackler Mus, 60.342; Durham, University, 3, BA # 9115; Paris, Musée du Louvre, CA1857, BA # 9599; London, British Museum, 1905.11-2.3, BA # 16212; Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, 3719, BA # 31334; Agrigento, Museo Archeologico Regionale, AG22276, BA # 31412; Athens, National Museum, Acropolis Coll., 1.2531, BA # 32237; Chicago (IL), Art Institute, 89.27, BA # 211642; Havana, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, 163, BA # 211643; Munich, Antikensammlungen, SL476, BA # 214538; Paris, Musée du Louvre, CA587, BA # 216046; Chiusi, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, 1831, BA # 216789; Stanford (CA), Stanford University, 17.412, BA # 275754; New York (NY), Metropolitan

even patrons of wool-working, it was apparently quite another thing, in the mind of Attic vase painters, to actually show them as engaged in such manual labor. That she is shown at her loom means that in the Kabirion burlesques, Kirke is caricatured not only through the changes in her physical appearance, but also through indications of a changed character – from fearful goddess to domesticated mortal woman.²⁷⁶

The scene of Odysseus traveling is example of another strain of Kabirion humor – the creation of what is to our knowledge an entirely new scene.²⁷⁷ (fig. 3.35) This scene, the reverse of the third Odysseus and Kirke scene, above, shows a grotesque Odysseus, identified by an inscription, sailing on a craft made of two pointed amphorae. He appears to be running, or at least has his legs spread. In one hand he holds a trident; the other arm is muffled in a cloak. At the upper right-hand corner, a grotesque head, covered in scruffy hair, puffs out its cheeks; another inscription identifies it as Boreas. Scholars have usually identified this journey as the one Odysseus takes after leaving Kalypso, although this is perhaps not strictly necessary, since in the *Odyssey*, Boreas several other times aided or interfered with Odysseus's sailing.²⁷⁸ There are no representations of Odysseus traveling

Museum, 31.11.10, BA # 310485. Several of these scenes also include men and youths, suggesting that the women are prostitutes: for example, Chicago (IL), Art Institute, 89.27, BA # 211642; Havana, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, 163, BA # 211643; Munich, Antikensammlungen, SL476, BA # 214538.

²⁷⁶ The assertions of Moret, that Kirke as a weaver has an Orphic significance, are not believable; they are based on tenuous links to fragments of Orphic discourse about weaving and backed by the convenient assertion that “only the initiate can decipher the scene.” Jean-Marc Moret, “Circé tisseuse sur les vases du Cabirion,” *RA* (1991), pp. 227-266. 233. A parodic interpretation is more satisfyingly comprehensive.

²⁷⁷ Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, G249, BA # 680002 (no inv. no. assigned in *KH* IV).

²⁷⁸ Boreas appears in the *Odyssey* in episodes beginning with lines 5.295, 5.385, 9.67, 9.81, 10.507, and 14.253.

in surviving Attic art, but Wolters and Bruns suggested a comparison with certain Attic gemstones.²⁷⁹ (fig. 3.36-3.44) All these are figures sailing on amphora-rafts, either Erotes or a human figure who, when he holds a club, is identifiable as Herakles. These may be linked to the several Attic vases with scenes of Herakles sailing in a cup given to him by Helios.²⁸⁰ (fig. 3.45) This does not seem to have been the most serious of his adventures, and indeed, on both these cups and the gems, the mood seems to be light-hearted. It is likely that the Kabirion painter was aware of such Attic iconography, though we cannot know whether it was his idea to apply it to Odysseus or whether there were more apt models – we will again see the Kabirion painters' adoption of Attic comic motifs. Thus we cannot be sure if the Odysseus scene is a parody of the journey of Herakles, or if they are both rather humorous stories. Perhaps supporting the latter option, an Attic cup

²⁷⁹ Adolf Furtwängler, *Antiken Gemmen: Geschichte der Steinschneidekunst im klassischen Altertum*. Leipzig, Berlin, Giesecke & Devrient, 1900. pl. 20.35: carnelian in Vienna; pl. 20.36: carnelian, coll. Carelli; pl. 20.37: carnelian, coll. Vidoni; pl. 20.38: carnelian, coll. Durand (upper body and head likely recarved); pl. 20.39: carnelian from Chiusi, coll. Pasquini; pl. 20.40: Carnelian in Berlin, inv. no. 231. Salomon Reinach, *Pierres gravées des collections Marlborough et d'Orléans, des recueils d'Eckhel, Gori, Lévesque de Gravelle, Mariette, Millin, Stosch*. Paris: Firmin-Didot et Cie, 1895. pl. 37. no. 77.1: red jasper, Mus. Bonar; 77.3: jasper, Mus. Bonar; 77.4: red jasper, Mus. Bonar.

²⁸⁰ Vatican City, Museo Gregoriano Etrusco Vaticano, 545, BA # 205336 and Boston (MA), Museum of Fine Arts, 03.783, BA # 302333. On this story, see Carlo Carena, "La Cosmologia di Talete e la coppa solare dei poeti ionici," *Rivista Rosminiana*, 56 (1962), pp. 22-32; Salvatore Settis, *Saggio sull'Afrodite Urania di Fidia*. Pisa: Nistri-Lischi, 1967. 67-72; Martin Robertson, "Geryoneis: Stesichorus and the Vase-Painters," *Classical Quarterly*, 19.2 (1969), pp. 207-221. 207-21; Giuseppe Giangrande, "Musaeus and the Voyage of the Sun," *Quaderni Urbinati*, 9 (1970), pp. 145-6; G. Karl Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme: The Adaptations of the Hero in Literature from Homer to the Twentieth Century*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1972. 20-21 and 252. Literary sources are collected in Giangrande; B. Wyss, *Antimachi Colophonii Reliquiae*, Berlin: Weidman, 1936. fr. 66; and Victor J. Matthews, *Panyassis of Halikarnassos: Text and Commentary*. Leiden: Brill, 1974. fr. 7K and 28, and Martin L. West, *Studies in Greek Elegy and Iambus*. Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1974. 175-6.

showing satyrs floating over the sea, riding on wineskins.²⁸¹ One could also connect this image to the Attic tendency to visually play with the idea of a pot full of wine as being like a miniature sea – thus several known vases have waves or ships painted around their inner rims, or, like the psykter in New York with a dolphin-born chorus, are meant to bob their painted waves among the ripples of wine.²⁸² The Kabirion painter's similar appreciation of the "wine-dark sea" again demonstrates his links with Attic vase-painting.²⁸³

Another small detail shows an even larger character change in a scene which seems to be a parody of Kadmos' encounter with the Dragon.²⁸⁴ (fig. 3.46) Here, a large snake rears its head, out of a thicket of long reeds, staring at an extremely grotesque male figure. He falls backwards, apparently defecating in fear. He holds a walking-stick and wears some clothing as well as a traveler's hat. Behind him, having flown off his shoulders, is a traveling yoke with baggage and a situla attached. Attic vases show

²⁸¹ Paris, Musée du Louvre, G92, BA # 201118. On this cup, see François Lissarrague, *The Aesthetics of the Greek Banquet: Images of Wine and Ritual*. Trans. Andrew Szegedy. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991. 73.

²⁸² For a discussion of these vases, see M.I. Davis, "Sailing, Rowing, and Sporting in One's Cup on the Wine-Dark Sea," in *Athens Comes of Age: From Solon to Salamis: Papers of a Symposium Sponsored by the Archaeological Institute of America, Princeton Society and the Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University*. Princeton, N. J.: Archaeological Institute of America, 1978. pp. 72-95; W. Slater, "Symposium at Sea," HSCP 80 (1976); Slater, "Peace, the Symposium and the Poet," ICS 6 (1981) 205-214; and Lissarrague, *Aesthetics of the Greek Banquet*, chapter on "Wine and the Wine-Dark Sea."

²⁸³ On Homer's "wine-dark sea," see D.H.F. Gray, "Homeric Epithets for Things," *CQ*, 41 (1947), pp. 109-21, especially 109-113.

²⁸⁴ no. 356 (Berlin, Staatliche Mus., 3284).

Kadmos dressed as a traveler and usually outfitted with a hydria.²⁸⁵ (fig. 3.47) The Dragon is a large snake whose head rises towards the hero, and the Sotades Painter even has it rise from a thicket of reeds.²⁸⁶ (fig. 3.48) These similarities make it likely that the hero in this Kabirion scene is also Kadmos. Unlike the Attic Kadmos, this figure carries a situla, not a hydria. The latter, as can be seen from their deployment on the Parthenon frieze, would have carried religious, dignified connotations. Situlai and buckets, by contrast, are in Attic vase-painting shown as the accessories of bathing men and women.²⁸⁷ The Kabirion painter is perhaps suggesting that Kadmos intended a bath at the spring instead of intending to rescue his missing men. The yoke also makes this Kadmos into a solitary traveler interrupted during the course of his wanderings instead of the leader of an expedition.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁵ For example: Amsterdam, Allard Pierson Museum, 1611, BA # 215350.

²⁸⁶ New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 07.286.66, BA # 207136.

²⁸⁷ Examples of buckets in Attic vase-painting: associated with a woman or women washing at a laver: New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 1986.322.1, BA # 1142; Athens, Agora Museum, P27677, BA # 22340; Brussels, Musées Royaux, A889. Washing athletes: Paris, Musée du Louvre, G291, BA # 204715. Washing satyrs: Berkeley (CA), Phoebe Apperson Hearst Mus. of Anthropology, 8.4583, BA # 202585.

²⁸⁸ It has often been noted by scholars of this vase that Kadmos was a national hero, not only of Boeotia, but specifically of Thebes, of which he was the mythological founder (Apollodoros, 3.4.1). According to Pausanias, the Thebans pointed out to travelers the very spring at which Kadmos killed the Dragon (*Pausanias*, 9.10.5.). Lapalus, arguing that the Kabirion vases show parodies of serious myths performed during the *dromena*, suggested that Kadmos must have been honored during the Kabirion rites: Étienne Lapalus, “Sur le sens des parodies de thèmes héroïques dans la peinture des vases du Kabirion Thébain,” *RA*, 5th series, 32, (1930), pp. 65-88. 75-78. Upon examination, there is little to differentiate this vase from any other Kabirion burlesque scene, and its comparative fidelity to the Attic iconography of Kadmos shows that its painters was thinking about these models at least as much as any local tradition or performance.

Another strategy of the Kabirion scenes is to increase the liveliness of stories which already had humorous possibilities in Attic vase-painting or literature. One example of this is the Kabirion scene of Herakles and the Erymanthian Boar.²⁸⁹ (fig. 3.49) In it, a grotesque male figure, holding an unusually large club, whose head he rests on the ground, stands at rest. In front of him, with all legs off the ground, is a boar. From it flees another, shorter grotesque male figure. Attic painters created comic scenes out of the story of Eurystheus hiding from the ferocious boar he had commanded Herakles to bring back alive. (fig. 3.50-3.51) The Kabirion example is different from these comic Attic scenes because its painter has removed Eurystheus' hiding place and released the boar. Both these choices accord with the Kabirion painters' preference for lively scenes, while also giving a better opportunity to show off caricatured bodies. The boar is smaller than the one Herakles usually handles in the Attic iconography; perhaps this is meant to emphasize Eurystheus' cowardice, afraid even of small wild animals. Its position, flying through the air, perhaps shows that Herakles has just thrown it off of his shoulder. Another small change makes a good joke, as well, for the Kabirion painter has shown Herakles leaning on his club, underlining his refusal to help his cousin.

This increase in the liveliness of an already comic story is most visible in the Kabirion scenes of the battles between pygmies and cranes, of which there are at least five.²⁹⁰ (fig. 3.52-3.55) Compared to Attic versions of the scene, these Kabirion enemies act in a more bestial manner. Several pygmies are shown biting cranes' necks, and the

²⁸⁹ no. 407 (New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 37.11.2).

²⁹⁰ no. 324 (Athens, National Museum, 10530, BA # 31428); no. 355 (Berlin, Staatliche Mus., 3179); no. 354 (Berlin, Staatliche Mus., 3159); no. 299 (Athens, NM 12880); no. 399 (London, BM B77).

cranes retaliate by attacking the pygmies' genitals; one even sticks its beak into a pygmy's anus.²⁹¹

Some scholars firmly believe that the Kabirion ware scenes are illustrations of comic theatrical performances, while others just as firmly argue that the scenes shown could not possibly be theatrical. Still others, more cautiously, hold that the scenes are influenced by, but not doggedly representational of, theatrical performances. I will adopt the latter conclusion, based on the painters' obvious close attention to the scenes painted of Attic vases. Please see Appendix 2 for a fuller discussion of the theatricality of the Kabirion vases.

The Kabirion Sanctuary

Given the complex and raucous humor of images, what were their context and their use? Those with known findspots were associated with the sanctuary of the Kabeiroi.²⁹² (fig. 3.56) Few findspots for vases not found during the official excavations

²⁹¹ Compare to the bee attacking a honey-thief's anus on London, British Museum, B177.

²⁹² It is probable that Thebes was not the closest urban settlement, since, in the Teneric Plain, c. 8 km west of Thebes and only 3 km northwest of the Kabirion valley (500 m from the 88km marker of the Thebes-Livadia road), there is a cemetery with graves from the Late Archaic and Classical periods, which shows that there must have been a substantial settlement in the area. On the cemetery, see W. Aravantinos, "Theta Eforeia Proistorikon kai Klassikon Archaioyton," *ArchDelt* 49B.1 (1999), pp. 284-286. On its connection to the Kabirion sanctuary, see Schachter, "Evolutions of a Mystery Cult," 114. The sanctuary would also have been the gathering-place for the numerous farmholds that survey archeology finds were a common type of settlement in Boeotia (with, for example, 69 classical sites identified in the area around Thespiae, which is close to the sanctuary, which have an average size of only 0.5 hectares: A. M. Snodgrass, "The rural landscape and its political significance," *Opus*, 6-8 (1987-1989), pp. 53-70. 54; see also Snodgrass, "Survey Archaeology and the Rural Landscape of the Greek City," in *The*

are known. A substantial number of these entered museum and private collections through the antiquities market, presumably from illicit excavations at or near the Kabirion.²⁹³ None of the find-spots for the vases with mythological parodies are known. The confusion over find-spots for the pottery from the sanctuary is in part due to the history of the publication of the excavation, since the original excavators and then the later editor died before formal publication, and pottery and even architectural elements disappeared between their excavation and these final publications. It is even difficult to know whether the Kabirion vases now in other collections were found outside of the sanctuary or were taken from illicit excavations there. Braun and Haevernick suggest that unbroken examples of Kabirion ware of unknown provenance may have come from graves in the vicinity of Thebes, since examples found onsite are always fragmentary.²⁹⁴ Collection records reveal only a few fragments of Kabirion vases to have been definitely found in Athens, but it is possible that the large number of Kabirion fragments now in the Athens National Museum means that they were found in Attica, perhaps taken or even re-dedicated by traveling or returning initiates.²⁹⁵

Greek City from Homer to Alexander, ed. Oswyn Murray and Susan Price. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990. pp. 113–37. 119ff.).

²⁹³ For the find-spots of the vases, see *KH* IV, pp. 30-33.

²⁹⁴ *KH* II, 2.

²⁹⁵ *KH* I, 126, citing *CVA* Bonn p. 31. The mythological scenes now in Athens are: no. 302 (Athens, NM 10426) (Kabirios and Pais); no. 324 (Athens, National Museum, 10530, BA # 31428) (Bellerophon and the Chimera); no. 303 (Athens, NM 10429) (Kephalos); no. 299 (Athens, NM 12880) (pygmy and cranes). The other figural scenes now in Athens are as follows: no. 290 (Athens, NM 426) (grotesque procession); no. 291 (Athens, NM 425) (grotesque dancer with ribbons and garlands); no. 292 (Athens, NM 427) (grotesque processions); no. 293 (Athens, NM 438) (grotesque male figure, possibly making a sacrifice); no. 296 (Athens, NM 545) (satyrs and men dancing); no. 297

The Kabirion sanctuary is in a valley with a prominent natural rock formation in its middle, bordered at the west by a stream running north into the Teneric Plain, and was originally divided by a second stream running from the east to meet the first.²⁹⁶ A

German team excavated the sanctuary in 1887-1888, with subsequent excavations in the

(Athens, NM 10466) (grotesque symposium); no. 298 (Athens, NM 12547) (grotesque hunter); no. 301 (Athens, Coll. Kanellopoulos, inv. 690, BA # 360875) (grotesque hunting scenes); no. 304 (Athens, NM 10465) (satyrs and maenads); no. 305 (Athens, National Museum, 10530, BA # 31428) (reclining symposiast); no. 306 (Athens, NM, no inv no.) (grotesque male figure); no. 307 (Athens, NM 2043) (grotesque symposium); no. 308 (Athens, National Museum, 10530, BA # 31428) (foxes); no. 310 (Athens, National Museum, 10530, BA # 31428) (animal legs); no. 311 (Athens, National Museum, 10530, BA # 31428) (grotesque aulos-player); no. 312 (Athens, National Museum, 10530, BA # 31428) (grotesque procession); no. 313 (Athens, National Museum, 10530, BA # 31428) (grotesque dancer); no. 315 (Athens, National Museum, 10530, BA # 31428) (grotesque symposium); no. 317 (Athens, National Museum, 10530, BA # 31428) (male figure); no. 318 (Athens, National Museum, 10530, BA # 31428) (male figure); no. 319 (Athens, National Museum, 10530, BA # 31428) (grotesque running figure); no. 320 (Athens, National Museum, 10530, BA # 31428) (grotesque dwarf figure with a leashed dog); no. 321 (Athens, NM, no inv. no.) (grotesque male figure); no. 322 (Athens, NM, no inv. no.) (grotesque male figure); no. 323 (Athens, National Museum, 10530, BA # 31428) (grotesque male figure); no. 325 (Athens, National Museum, 10530, BA # 31428) (grotesque male figure – a hunter?); no. 328 (Athens, National Museum, 10530, BA # 31428) (grotesque male figure – a hunter?); no. 329 (Athens, National Museum, 10530, BA # 31428) (grotesque boxers); no. 330 (Athens, National Museum, 10530, BA # 31428) (grotesque figures); no. 350 (Athens, NM, no inv. no.) (grotesque symposium). The remaining Kabirion ware pieces in Athens have only floral decoration: no. 294-295 and 331-349 (all Athens, National Museum).

Among the only certainly located Kabirion vases outside of the sanctuary are those excavated from the Thespian Polyandrion: no. 413 (Thebes, Archeological Mus., ΘΠ570) (running hunting dogs); no. 414 (Thebes, Archeological Mus., ΘΠ701) (dancing satyrs and a winged horse); no. 415 (Thebes, Archeological Mus., ΘΠ491) (floral). On these, see D.U. Schilardi, *The Thespian Polyandrion (424 B.C.): The Excavations and Finds from the Thespian State Burials*. Diss., Princeton University, 1977. 112-114, 235. Also, a pig-shaped Kabirion vase with a pygmy chasing a fox on one side and two pygmies racing on the other was found in a town at Epizephyrian Lokri, and is now in Museo Nazionale at Reggio-Calabria: “Locri Epizephrii,” *NSc* (1913), *Suppl. Locri Epizephrii*, p. 36 and fig. 45; also, Nicola Bonacasa, *ArchClass*, (1958), vol. 10, pp. 50-4.

²⁹⁶ Schachter, “Evolutions of a Mystery Cult,” 115. Schachter notes that there are similar rock formations at Eleusis (the Mirthless Rock) and Samothrace (rock altars). Another description of the site can be found in John M. Fossey, *Topography and Population of Ancient Boiotia*, vol. 1. Chicago: Ares, 1988. 211-212.

1950's and 1960's. Preliminary reports were published soon after the first excavations, and an excellent series of six volumes of official reports on the architecture and finds from the area followed.²⁹⁷

The deities of the sanctuary are named in inscriptions on votive objects, which are dedicated to the Kabeiroi, in the plural, to Kabirios, in the singular, or to Kabirios and

²⁹⁷ Preliminary publications of the first excavations: Walther Judeich, "Das Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben, I," *AM*, 13 (1888), pp. 81-87; W. Dörpfeld, "Das Kabirenheiligtum bei Thebe, II," *AM*, 13 (1888), pp. 87-99; H. Winnefeld, "Das Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben, III, Die Vasenfunde," *AM*, 13 (1888), pp. 412-428; Paul Wolters, "Das Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben, IV, Die Terrakotten," *AM*, 15 (1890), pp. 355-364; Paul Wolters, "Das Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben, VI, Verschiedenes," *AM*, 15 (1890), pp. 375-377; B. Graef, "Das Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben, V, Gegenstände aus Bronze und Blei," *AM*, 15 (1890), pp. 365-374. Another important early publication on the vases found in the sanctuary is H.B. Walters, "Odysseus and Kirke on a Boeotian Vase," *JHS*, vol. 13 (1892-93), pp. 77-87.

Preliminary publications of the second series of excavations: Gerda Bruns, "Die Ausgrabungen im Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben in Böotien," in *Neue deutsche Ausgrabungen im Mittelmeergebiet und im Vorderen Orient*. Deutsches Archäologisches Institut. Berlin: Mann, 1959. 237-48; Gerda Bruns, "Grabungen im Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben," *ADelt* 18 (1963), pp. 115-121; Gerda Bruns, "Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben: Vorläufiger bericht über die Grabungskampagnen 1959 und 1962," *AA* (1964), pp. 231-65; Gerda Bruns, "Grabungen im Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben," *ADelt* 21 (1966), pp. 207-209; Gerda Bruns, "Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben: Vorläufiger bericht über die Grabungskampagnen 1964-1966," *AA* (1967), pp. 228-273.

The official reports are: Paul Wolters and Gerda Bruns, *Das Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1940; Bernard Schmaltz, *Terrakotten aus dem Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974; Wolfgang Heyder und Alfred Mallwitz, *Die Bauten im Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1978; Bernard Schmaltz, *Metallfiguren aus dem Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980; Karin Braun and Elisabeth Haevernick, *Bemalte Keramik und Glas aus dem Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1981; Ursula Heimberg, *Die Keramik des Kabirions*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1982.

Because there has been relatively little English-language attention to the sanctuary, besides the contributions of Schachter, this chapter will contain more background and summary material than for the sanctuaries and rituals of other chapters, whose scholarship is more accessible.

Pais.²⁹⁸ (fig. 3.57) These dedications accord with the only extensive ancient description of the sanctuary, that of Pausanias:

...you come to a grove of Demeter Kabeiraia and Kore. The initiated are permitted to enter it. The sanctuary of the Kabeiroi is some seven stades distant from this grove. I must ask the curious to forgive me if I keep silence as to who the Kabeiroi are, and what is the nature of the ritual performed in honor of them and of the Mother. But there is nothing to prevent my declaring to all what the Thebans say was the origin of the ritual. They say that once there was in this place a city, with inhabitants called Kabeiroi; and that Demeter came to know Prometheus, one of the Kabeiroi, and Aetnaelis his son, and entrusted something to their keeping. But I will not write about what was entrusted to them, and what happened to it, but at any rate the rites are a gift of Demeter to the Kabeiroi.... The wrath of the Kabeiroi no man may placate, as has been proved on many occasions. For certain private people dared to perform in Naupactus the ritual (*dromena*) just as it was done in Thebes, and soon afterwards justice overtook them. Then, again, certain men of the army of Xerxes left behind with Mardonius in Boeotia entered the sanctuary of the Kabeiroi, perhaps in the hope of great wealth, but rather, I suspect, to show their contempt of its gods; all these immediately were struck with madness, and flung themselves to their deaths into the sea or from the tops of precipices. Again, when Alexander after his victory wasted with fire all the Thebaid, including Thebes itself, some men from Macedonia entered the sanctuary of the Kabeiroi, as it was in enemy territory, and were destroyed by thunder and lightning from heaven.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁸ For reproductions and discussions of inscriptions on vases from the sanctuary dedicated to the Kabeiroi, see E. Szanto, "Das Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben, VII, Inschriften," *AM*, 15 (1890), pp. 378-419. 396-407; and also Wilhelm Dittenberger, *Inscriptiones Graeciae septentrionalis*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1932. Vol. I, 3575-4126. There are also inscriptions on other objects from the sanctuary: *IG VII* (1892), n. 2420; n. 2428 (which mentions *Kabiriarchoi* as leading priests and *paragogeis*, introducers, as mystagoges in the rituals); n. 2457-2460; n. 2467-2468; n. 2477; n. 3575-n. 4126. All of the objects are inscribed "to Kabirios," "to Pais," or "to the Kabiroi and Pais." The majority are in the Boeotian alphabet. Most date from the mid 5th c. BCE; the oldest is from the late 6th c. BCE and the latest from the 2nd c. AD.

²⁹⁹ Paus., 9.25.5-10. Trans. (modified) by W.H.S. Jones and H.A. Ormerod. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1918. Pausanias also mentions the Theban Kabeiroi sanctuary at 4.1.7, and briefly describes another sanctuary of the Kabeiroi in Boeotia, in Anthedon at 9.22.5. The only other textual source for the Theban Kabirion is Diodorus, *Epigrammata*: Anthol. Pal. VI 245. The most comprehensive analysis of the Pausanias passage is that of Bengt Hemberg, *Die Kabiren*. Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells Boktryckeri, 1950. 204-205.

The exact number and nature of the Kabeiroi, as well as the details of their cult, are left piously vague by Pausanias. Other sanctuaries of the Kabeiroi are known from archeological and textual evidence on Chios, Delos, Lemnos, Samothrace, and possibly Lokris;³⁰⁰ unfortunately, these sources merely add to the confusion, for they assign conflicting identities and roles to the Kabeiroi.³⁰¹ Each sanctuary seems to associate the Kabeiroi with the principle deities of the area. At Lemnos, the Kabeiroi were thought to be children of Hephaistos,³⁰² while at Samothrace, they were followers of Dionysos, and seem to have been guardians of a sacred phallus, being involved in mystery initiations more similar to those referred to by Pausanias at Thebes.³⁰³ The Kabeiroi were so

³⁰⁰ For a listing of the evidence and sources, see Hemberg, *Die Kabiren*. Lokris is mentioned as a sanctuary of either the Kabeiroi or the Dioskouroi by Pausanias, 10.38.7. Besides Hemberg, other influential scholarship on the Kabeiroi includes: Otto Kern, "Die boiotischen Kabiren," *Hermes* 25 (1890), pp. 1-16; Otto Kern, s.v. Kabeiros und Kabeiroi, *RE* 10 (1919) 1399-1450; Albert Schachter, *Cults of Boiotia*. London: University of London, Institute of Classical Studies, 1981; Susan Guettel Cole, *Theoi Megaloi: The Cult of the Great Gods at Samothrace*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984; Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion*. Trans. John Raffan. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press, 1985. 281-285.

³⁰¹ For a discussion of the various names assigned to Kabeiroi-like gods or individual members of this group in texts and archeological evidence, see Hemberg, *Die Kabiren*, 240-257. For the meaning and derivation of the word "Kabeiroi", see Hemberg, 318-325. The ancient mentions of the Kabeiroi are catalogued in Appendix 2.

³⁰² For the Lemnian Kabeiroi: Callimachus, *Aetia* fr. 115; Strabo, *Geography* 10.3.7 and 10.3.19-21; Nonnus, *Dionysiaca* 14.17.

³⁰³ The Kabeiroi at Samothrace: Herodotus, *Histories* 2.51; Clement, *Exhortation to the Greeks* 2.16; Orphic Hymn 39 to Corybas; Strabo, *Geography* 10.3.7, 9, 15, 19-21 and book 7, fr. 47, 50; Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 1.916; Diodorus Siculus, 4.43.1, 4.48.6, 4.49.8, 5.48.2, and 5.64.3; Aelian, *On Animals* 15.23; Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica* 2.431; Nonnus, *Dionysiaca* 3.61 and 4.184; Suidas, s.v. "Zerynthia"; Suidas, s.v. "all' ei tis humôn en Samothraikei memuemenos esti." The Orphic hymns also mention the Kabeiroi of Samothrace, if indeed the Kabeiroi were also known as

mutable a set of deities that Herodotus could even give their name to a group of Egyptian gods, the sons of Ptah.³⁰⁴ They are elsewhere associated with or even identified with the Kouretes of Crete, the Idaean Daktyloi, and the Phrygian Kouretes, as Strabo reports with some frustration.³⁰⁵ Ancient sources give little information about the rites of the cult in any of these locations, since, like Pausanias in the case of the Theban Kabirion, authors are unwilling to discuss these other mystery rituals.³⁰⁶ The only attempt to reveal the mysteries of the Kabeiroi is that of Clement of Alexandria, who purports to disclose the secret of the cult at Samothrace, but his account is late, undoubtedly distorted, and does not contain many helpful specifics.³⁰⁷ Strabo, the author to take the most pains to attempt

Korybantes and Kuretes: Orphic Hymn 31 to the Kuretes, Orphic Hymn 38 to the Kuretes, and Orphic Hymn 39 to Korybas.

³⁰⁴ Herodotus, *Histories* 3.37.2.

³⁰⁵ “Many writers have identified the gods that are worshipped in Samothrace with the Kabeiroi, though they cannot say who the Kabeiroi themselves are, just as the Korybantes, and likewise the Kouretes and the Idaean Daktyloi, are identified with them.” - Strabo, *Geography*, bk 7, fr. 50. “Some represent the Korybantes, the Kabeiroi, the Idaean Daktyloi, and the Telkhines as identical with the Kouretes, others represent them as all kinsmen of one another and differentiate only certain small matters in which they differ in respect to one another...” Strabo, *Geography* 10.3.7; see also 10.3.5 and 9.

³⁰⁶ A very similar profession of an unwillingness to speak about the cult is contained in the description of Samothrace of Diodorus Siculus, 5.48.2ff, and Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 1.916ff: “the mysteries of which we must not sing”. For a discussion of the evidence for the cult ritual, see Hemberg, *Die Kabiren*, 197-204.

³⁰⁷ “...this is the story. Two of the Korybantes [later identified by Clement as the Kabeiroi] slew a third one, who was their brother, covered the head of the corpse with a purple cloak, and then wreathed and buried it, bearing it upon a brazen shield to the skirts of Olympos. Here we see what the Mysteria are, in one word, murders and burials! The priests of these Mysteria, whom such as are interested in them call *anaktotelestes*, add a portent to the dismal tale. They forbid wild celery, root and all, to be placed on the table, for they actually believe that wild celery grows out of the blood that flowed from the murdered brother ...” Clement, *Exhortation to the Greeks*, 2.16.

to identify the Kabeiroi, also tries to describe their rituals, but is again defeated by the variance in his sources:

Now this is common both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, to perform their [the Kabeiroi] sacred rites in connection with the relaxation of a festival, these rites being performed sometimes with religious frenzy, sometimes without it; sometimes with music, sometimes not; and sometimes in secret, sometimes openly.³⁰⁸

Thus, besides the likelihood that the Boeotian sanctuary featured opportunities for initiation into some sort of mystery cult, what can be known about this and other features of the Kabirion cult must be deduced from archeological evidence. A deity labeled Kabirios is twice represented on surviving painted pottery from the site. (fig. 3.57) On the larger fragment, he is accompanied by a youthful figure labeled Pais, evidently his fellow-deity, as well as other, more grotesquely painted figures, labeled Pratolaos, Mitos, and Karteis.³⁰⁹ The way in which Kabirios is represented on these fragments, as a bearded god, holding out a wine-cup while reclining on a *kline*, has suggested to most scholars that in Boeotia he was identified with Dionysos, who often is portrayed in this manner in

³⁰⁸ Strabo, *Geography* 10.3.9.

³⁰⁹ Pais is sometimes regarded as a partner-deity to Kabirios, especially since there are dedications with “*pais*” written on them: see Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 281. Schachter proposes that Kabirios and Pais are “possibly” linked deities following a pattern often seen in Boeotia of male pairs of deities consisting of one dominant and one more junior partner: Amphion and Zethos (at Thebes and Eutresis and possible Mt. Kithairon), Trophonios and Agameded (at Orchomenos, Lebadeia and Hyria), and Leukispos and Ehippos (at Tanagra). Albert Schachter, “Some Underlying Cult Patterns in Boeotia,” in *Proceedings of the First International Conference on Boiotian Antiquities. Teiresias*, supplement I (1972), pp. 17-30. 20-21.

The names of their companions, suggesting “first man,” “sperm,” and “strong women,” were understood by Burkert as references to a myth of first progenitors, but Schachter protests that Pratolaos and Mitos are Greek personal names attested in Boeotia, while Krateia, although not found in Boeotia, is a common Greek name elsewhere. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 281; Schachter, “Evolutions of a Mystery Cult,” 131.

Attic vase-painting.³¹⁰ Given the tendency to assimilate the Kabirioi to important local deities in their other sanctuaries, an association with Dionysos here is not unlikely, especially since Boeotian inscriptions from the 3rd century BCE demonstrate the existence of companies - *technites* - of Dionysiac artists, at least two of them based in Thebes,³¹¹ and Dionysos' importance at Thebes is further reinforced by his appearance on Theban coinage in the second half of the 5th century BCE.³¹² Other evidence supports a Dionysiac character for the Kabiric rites: in a fragment from Aeschylus' play *Kabeiroi*, in which the Kabeiroi formed the chorus, they welcome the Argonauts to Lemnos and introduce themselves as prodigious wine drinkers.³¹³ Wine vessels were also found in the Kabirion sanctuaries of Lemnos and Thebes, and the cups from the Kabirion of Thebes

³¹⁰ For discussion of the identification of Kabiroy with Dionysos, see Hemberg, *Die Kabiren*, 193-197. Nielsen connects the Kabeiroi and Dionysos through Boeotia's being the mythological birthplace of Dionysos and the location of the origin of Dionysos Eleuthereus. Inge Nielsen, *Cultic Theatres and Ritual Drama: A Study in Regional Development and Religious Interchange between East and West in Antiquity*. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2002. 133.

³¹¹ Paul Roesch, *Etudes Béotiennes*. Paris, E. de Boccard, 1982. 186-202.

³¹² That the Kabiroy were assimilated to local deities was proposed by Schachter, "Evolutions of a Mystery Cult," 112. Dionysos' importance at Thebes: Albert Schachter, "Gods in the Service of the State: the Boiotian Experience," in *Federazioni e Federalismo nell'Europa Antica*, ed. Luciana Aigner Foresti et al. Milan: Vita e pensiero, 1994. 71, 78. The Dionysiac character of the Kabirion sanctuary may indicate its connection to Thebes, since Schachter notes that Dionysos seems not to have been such an important deity elsewhere in Boeotia, where Athena, Zeus, Apollo, and Poseidon were the *ethnos* deities.

³¹³ Aesch. Fr. 45 (Mette). On this fragment, see Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 281. Additionally, the Kabeiroi are mentioned several times as taking part of Dionysos' Indian triumph in the *Dionysiaca* of Nonnus (who thinks of them as children of Hephaistos and based at Samothrace): 14.17, 17.192, 24.77, 27.325, 29.193, 30.42, 30.135, 43.307.

are always broken, as if used in a ritual and then deliberately destroyed.³¹⁴ It is thus very probable that the Kabirion vases with comic imagery were used during celebrations of Dionysos (or a Dionysos-like deity). Celebrants would offer a sacrifice to the deities, then cook and feast on the remains of the sacrifice, finishing with drinking parties and leaving behind their cups at the sanctuary after the end of the rituals.³¹⁵

The history of the development of the sanctuary can be reconstructed from archeological evidence.³¹⁶ Only in the 6th century BCE do buildings certainly appear. The

³¹⁴ Gerda Bruns, "Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben: Vorläufiger bericht über die Grabungskampagnen 1964-1966," *AA* (1967), pp. 228-273. 271.

³¹⁵ The quantity of offering and continual use of the site suggest an active cult, but Schachter has proposed that the Kabiroi were worshipped only in a limited area of the Greek mainland, based on few known occurrence of proper names derived from *kabirios*: there is only one from classical period, a Theban polemarch, and fifteen from the Hellenistic and Roman periods, almost all from Boeotia or nearby: Schachter, "Evolutions of a Mystery Cult," 113. Classical period: Kabirichos, a Theban polemarch who died in 379 BCE. Schachter, *Cults of Boiotia*, 78 and n.2. Hellenistic and Roman periods: 15 names from Boeotia: 2 from Thebes, 2 each from Thespieae, Thisbe, Tanagra, and Oropos, one each from Halai, Akraiphia, and Chaironeia, and one unspecified. All except the polemarch are Hellenistic or later: see P.M. Fraser and E. Matthews, *A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names*, vol. IIIB. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000, 478. Names from outside Boeotia (all Hellenistic): one each from Eretria (P.M. Fraser and E. Matthews, *A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names*, vol. I Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987, 242), Athens? (P.M. Fraser and E. Matthews, *A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names*, vol. II. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994, 244), Typaneai (P.M. Fraser and E. Matthews, *A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names*, vol. IIIA. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997, 227). As well, most of the coins found in this sanctuary were from Boeotia and adjacent regions: Schachter, "Evolutions of a Mystery Cult," 113, citing Ursula Heimberg, *Die Keramik des Kabirions*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1982. 122-124.

³¹⁶ Heyder and Mallwitz were the first to attempt such a history: Wolfgang Heyder und Alfred Mallwitz. *Die Bauten im Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben. (KH II)* Berlin: de Gruyter, 1978. 59-72. Their ideas were revised by Cooper, and Schachter has corrected this reconstruction, based on evidence from later publications in the *Kabirion Heiligtum* series: F.A. Cooper, review of Wolfgang Heyder und Alfred Mallwitz. *Die Bauten im Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben*, in *Gnomon* 54 (1982), 58-62. Schachter has revisited the history of the sanctuary in several publications, the most recent of which is Schachter,

many vase sherds and bronze and lead bovine votive figurines, some of which date back as far as 1000 B.C.E., as well as deposits of ashes, indicate that there was sacrificial cult activity in the sanctuary, though no altar has yet been found.³¹⁷

In the late 6th or early 5th century BCE, round tholoi and rectangular buildings began to be built in the sanctuary.³¹⁸ In particular, the several round buildings in the sanctuary are shaped in such a way as to suggest that they were used for symposia, and the few Kabirion vases whose find-spots are noted by the excavators were found in association with these buildings.³¹⁹ The largest and best preserved of the round buildings

“Evolutions of a Mystery Cult.” The history of the sanctuary given here is taken from this article.

³¹⁷ A few pieces of Geometric vases and some Boeotian, Corinthian, and Attic black-figure ware from the 6th c. BCE were present, as well as some later Attic and Boeotian red-figure, and black-glazed plainware from the archaic and classical periods. For the pottery finds, see Paul Wolters and Gerda Bruns, *Das Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben. Vol 1*. Berlin: Gruyter, 1940. pp. 81-128.

Altogether, 562 lead and bronze statuettes datable to the late archaic period were excavated, 534 of them bulls. For a slightly different dating of the distribution of the votive bulls within the 6th c. BCE, see Paul Roesch, “Les taureaux de bronze du Kabirion de Thèbes et l’écriture archaïque béotienne,” in *Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Boiotian Antiquities*, ed. John M. Fossey and Hubert Giroux. Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 1985. pp. 135-152.

³¹⁸ The lower and middle tholoi were constructed in the late 6th or early 5th century BCE, and in the early Classical period several other tholoi as well as the curved building were probably added. The rectangular building was constructed in around the last quarter of the 5th c. BCE. Some of these buildings are modified or remodeled during the classical period, while the curved building was removed in the late 4th c. BCE, at around the same time as the natural hill-slope where the theater would later be was banked up and extended to east and south.

³¹⁹ There would not have been room for couches, but Cooper and Morris have argued that dining in round buildings took place in a seated position, and that this building could have accommodated six to ten seated people: Frederick Cooper and Sarah Morris, “Dining in Round Buildings,” *Symptotica: A Symposium on the Symposium*. Ed. Oswyn Murray. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990. pp. 66-85. 66. Cooper and Morris develop the theories on the uses of tholoi of Lawrence, Tomlinson, and Seiler: A.W. Lawrence, *Greek*

was built in the later 6th century B.C.E. in the center of the sanctuary; it was made of mud-brick walls on stone orthostates, founded on rubble, with a diameter of 5.20 m.³²⁰ A wooden or clay bench ran along the walls at height of a little more than a half a meter. The floor was earthen, and showed succession of burnt patches in its center, composed of ash and charcoal layers, animal bones, and pottery, including Kabirion kantharoi.³²¹ The building was thus used for eating and drinking around a hearth.³²² This and similar dining

Architecture. 5th ed., rev. R.A. Tomlinson. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996. pp. 137-141; and Florian Seiler, *Die Griechische Tholos: Untersuchungen zur Entwicklung, Typologie und Funktion kunstmässiger Rundbauten*. Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1986.

³²⁰ no. 12 on the map. For this building, see *KH II*, 44-47, and Cooper and Morris, "Dining in Round Buildings," 66.

³²¹ A significant number of bone sherds were found in the sanctuary as a whole, mostly in layers dating to the Roman period. The majority (c. 80%) are the bones of sheep and goat bones, with oxen providing most of the rest (c. 10-15%) and small quantities of the bones of domestic swine, horse, dogs, deer of several types, fox, wild hare, mice, and turtles, with, of course, knucklebones for gaming. Joachim Boessneck, *Die Tierknochenfunde aus dem Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben (Böotien)*. Munich: 1973. 1.

³²² In the central round building were found no. 172, 180, 186, 192, 197 (all with only a floral band); no. 172-205 (all non-figural); no. 18 (a hunter, possibly grotesque, with a cage); no. 19 (grotesque running man); no. 86 (fox); no. 26 (animal legs); no. 69 (a hand); no. 2 (grotesque dancing satyrs); no. 8 (grotesque man, perhaps in a procession); no. 3 (grotesque male figure holding an aryballos); no. 35 (a krater); no. 103 (grotesque male figure, perhaps a processioneer); no. 666 (grotesque male figure); no. 90 (a tail?); no. 51 (grotesque male figure, perhaps a processioneer). Two adjoining tholoi are not well preserved. The sanctuary's rectangular building had a broad (c. 0.80m) bench along its three preserved sides; this bench could have accommodated reclining banqueters. This building is no. 13 on the map; see Cooper and Morris, "Dining in Round Buildings," 68. Pottery was also found in this building: no. 221-222 (all non-figural) and no. 107 (grotesque male figure). When the sanctuary was reorganized, the diversion of the stream destroyed the early tholoi, but new ones were constructed to replace them, and featured similar benches and central hearths. One of the tholoi disappeared in the mid 4th c. The mid 3rd c. saw the end of the use of the central round building, the other tholos, and the rectangular building when the so-called first temple, a round building which was most probably not a temple, appears. Cooper and Morris, "Dining in Round Buildings," 68. The change of the orientation of the sanctuary in the Hellenistic period meant that all these round buildings were abandoned; Cooper and Morris, like Schachter, propose that

structures may have been the privilege of priests or other special groups, while the other celebrants feasted outside or in tents.³²³ Indeed, there must have been such *al fresco* arrangements, since pottery has been found on the site that dates to before the construction of any of the buildings that could have been used for dining.³²⁴

In the period when most of the buildings were constructed (c. 500-275 BCE), the bovine votive figurines are replaced by the Kabirion kantharoi, other black-figure or black-glaze vases, both Boeotian and imported, and hundreds of terracotta figurines of

dining activity migrated to the stoas. Cooper and Morris, "Dining in Round Buildings," 68. The South stoa is over 20 m. long, with a depth of c. 8 m. the foundations and parts of east and south walls remain. On it, see Gerda Bruns, "Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben: Vorläufiger bericht über die Grabungskampagnen 1964-1966," *AA* (1967), pp. 228-273. 266-8; and J.J. Coulton, *The Architectural Development of the Greek Stoa*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976. 290. The sanctuary's other stoa, the West stoa, was build in first half of 3rd c. BCE and shows later repairs; it was either one or two-aisled, with a length of 38.4 m and a depth of c. 7 m. The remains consist of foundations and some parts of the lower wall, with one lower column drum *in situ*. On it, see Gerda Bruns in "Die Ausgrabungen im Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben in Böotien," in *Neue deutsche Ausgrabungen im Mittelmeergebiet und im Vorderen Orient*. Deutsches Archäologisches Institut. Berlin: Mann, 1959. 237-48. 244-5; "Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben: Vorläufiger bericht über die Grabungskampagnen 1959 und 1962," *AA* (1964), pp. 231-65. 251; "Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben: Vorläufiger bericht über die Grabungskampagnen 1964-1966," *AA* (1967), pp. 228-273. 259; and Coulton, *Architectural Development of the Greek Stoa*, 290. At least one tholos with an internal bench survived into the Hellenistic period; it was above the theater seats, had pottery associated with it, and was later replaced by a circular marble monument: For these structures, see *KH* II, 38-40, and Cooper and Morris, "Dining in Round Buildings," 68. The Kabirion ware found here is listed in *KH* IV as associated with the "Oberer Rundbau," but is in fact earlier in date: no. 223-225 (all non-figural); nr. 115 (grotesque male figure, possibly serving wine from a krater); no. 114 (grotesque male head).

³²³ Other Kabirion ware with recorded find-spots in the sanctuary: In the "Unterer Rundbau" were found no. 217-220 (all with only a floral band); no. 9 (fr. of a grotesque woman), no. 111 (a man, possibly grotesque, wearing a traveler's hat); no. 112 (chariot with horses, possibly grotesque); no. 116 (grotesque running male figure); no. 136 (grotesque man, or possibly a satyr). Curved building ("Apsisbau"): no. 206-216 (all non-figural). "Alter Nischenbau": no. 226-229 (all non-figural).

³²⁴ Schachter, "Evolutions of a Mystery Cult," 128.

animals and humans (mostly of boys).³²⁵ There are several hundred votive graffiti, mostly on potsherds, with names of both male and female dedicants.³²⁶

In the second quarter of the 3rd century BCE, the whole sanctuary was remodeled, with its axis shifted to east-west from the prior north-south, and an entry complex added, along with the south stoa. Many of the tholoi and other earlier buildings were removed.³²⁷ Later in the 3rd century BCE, a temple was constructed for the first time, and the theater was remade in stone, with a podium erected in its orchestra. With the demolition of the tholoi and other banqueting halls, the Kabirion kantharoi die out, as do black-glazed drinking vessels, which seems to indicate an end to symposia at the sanctuary; Schachter proposes a link to the destruction of Thebes after the battle of Chaironeia (338 BCE).³²⁸

³²⁵ The change from animal figurines to other forms of dedications is common in the Late Archaic period, not just in the Kabirion but also at Olympia, Delphi, and the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia at Sparta. See discussion in Robin Osborne, *Classical Landscape with Figures: The Ancient Greek City and its Countryside*. Dobbs Ferry (NY): Sheridan House, 1987. 186-187. Schachter has proposed that the new potsherds indicate “the addition of viticulture to the occupations of the devout”. Albert Schachter, “Boiotia in the Sixth Century B.C.,” in *Boiotika: Vorträge vom 5th Internationalen Böotian-Kolloquium*, ed. Harmut Beister and John Buckler. Munich: Editio Maris, 1989. pp. 73-86. 76.

³²⁶ For these inscriptions, see *KHI*, 20-35. On the dedicant names, see A Schachter, “Evolutions of a Mystery Cult,” 128. The female names mean that the theory, held by several early scholars, that only men and boys went to the Kabirion sanctuary while the women went to the sanctuary of Demeter Kabeira and Kore, is definitely mistaken: Paul Wolters, “Das Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben, IV, Die Terrakotten,” *AM*, 15 (1890), pp. 355-364. 362-363; and Otto Kern in *RE*, vol. 10 (1905), 1439.

³²⁷ Schachter associates this reconstruction, datable by pottery finds, with the restoration of Thebes which began in 315 BCE, especially since there are inscriptions stating that the polis of Thebes was responsible for the work in the sanctuary. “Evolutions of a Mystery Cult,” 118.

³²⁸ Schachter, “Evolutions of a Mystery Cult,” 132. Whatever the status of symposia, dining still continued at the sanctuary, as shown by the facilities for dining in the stoas constructed probably in the first half of the 2nd c. BCE, as well as by the many eating- and cooking-ware finds in the Hellenistic period – more than from any previous period. In the

Other ritual activities, besides feasting, are difficult to reconstruct. The meaning of other votive objects is disputed; some think that the dedication of votive animals indicates a role for the Kabeiroi as agricultural deities,³²⁹ while Burkert has proposed that the votive dedications of toys to Pais points to puberty initiations.³³⁰ Other scholars have attempted to reconstruct rituals from the scenes painted on Kabirion ware, but their conclusions are not convincing, especially in light of the exaggerated, parodic nature of these images.³³¹

2nd century AD, *oikoi* were constructed along the back of the western stoa; they, too, could have been used as dining rooms. Dining on site seems to have continued even into the Roman period, which left much fine glassware in the sanctuary.

³²⁹ For these votive offerings, see Bernard Schmaltz, *Terrakotten aus dem Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974 and Bernard Schmaltz, *Metallfiguren aus dem Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980.

³³⁰ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 281. Simon has maintained that the images on Kabirion ware are evidence for similar activities in the cult of Demeter Kabiria, whose sanctuary was nearby – seven stades away, according to Pausanias – but has not yet been located: Paus., 9.25.5-10. Erika Simon. *Götter der Griechen*. Munich: Hirmer, 1969. 100. There is little reason to think that the Kabirion sanctuary itself was dedicated to Demeter, or even that she was much worshipped there, since Demetrian cult-places usually feature large deposits of characteristic votive objects and inscriptions, of which the Kabirion itself has yielded few. For the characteristics of Demetrian sanctuaries, see Susan Guettel Cole, “Demeter in the Ancient Greek City and its Countryside,” in *Placing the Gods: Sanctuaries and Sacred Space in Ancient Greece*. Ed. Susan E. Alcock and Robin Osborne. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994. pp. 199-216.

³³¹ A good example of the difficulty of reconstructing ritual from such vase scenes is that of a kantharos showing a couple, the woman holding a round object, in a cart pulled by ithyphallic donkeys and surrounded by celebrating processioners (no. 289; Athens, NM, 424). (Schachter also uses this scene as an example of difficulty of interpreting these vases: “Evolutions of a Mystery Cult,” 131-132.) Some scholars have identified this scene as a representation of a cultic ritual of *hieros gamos*, a reenactment of the marriage of a god, presumably that of Dionysos and Ariadne performed by the head priest and his wife during the Anthesteria festival at Athens. Reading the scene thus, Collignon and Couve identified some of the processioners as satyrs, and the woman in the cart as playing a tympanon: Maxime Collignon and Louis Couve, *Catalogue des vases peints du Musée national d’Athènes*. Bibliothèque des Ecoles françaises d’Athènes et de Rome, fasc. 85

The dining facilities, tableware, and food remains show that feasting and drinking parties - symposia - were prominent features of the Kabirion rites.³³² Kabirion ware was

Paris: Fontemoing, 1902. 1132, p. 352-353. Others think the scene merely a grotesque representation of an ordinary, mortal wedding, with the woman holding a mirror, and the bridegroom bald and elderly. H. L. Lorimer, "The Country Cart of Ancient Greece," *JHS*, 23 (1903), pp. 132-151. 138; see also, Mitchell, *Comic Pictures in Greek Vase-Painting*, 176. The most recent reevaluation of the scene is unable to decide between the alternatives – wedding or procession: E. Loucas-Durie, "Some Comments on the Kabirion Vase, Athens N.M. 424," *Kernos Supplement*, 1 (1992), pp. 107-115. Daumas adds to the difficulty by maintaining, with little probability, that every female figure shown on Kabirion vases is really a transvestite male: Michèle Daumas, *Cabiriaca: recherches sur l'iconographie du culte des Cabires*. Paris: De Boccard, 1998. The inadvisability of this view is pointed out by Schachter, "Evolutions of a Mystery Cult," 130. The majority of Daumas' book shows the same overreaching over-interpretation, tenuous claims, and use of unreliable sources. Daumas assumes that every Kabirion scene must be evidence for cultic ritual; for example, that the grotesque figure on no. 292 (Athens, NM 427) dancing with two torches must be an initiate undergoing a test of dancing. 33. The dispute over this scene is probably irresolvable, and points to the cautious approach needed when dealing with such limited evidence. There are similar disputes over a scene of a couple drawn in a cart, another possible *hieros gamos*, from the frieze of the temple at the sanctuary of Hera at Metaponto: see J.C. Carter, "Sanctuaries in the *Chora* of Metaponto," in *Placing the Gods*, ed. Susan Alcock and Robin Osborne. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994. 169.

The possibility of over-reading is not limited to the *hieros gamos* scene: Simon wrote that Hermes was part of mystery cult at Kabirion simply because there is a procession towards a herm on one Kabirion ware scene, no. 290 (Athens, NM 426). Simon, *Götter der Griechen*, 305.

³³² Ritual drinking and dining also took place in the sanctuary of the Kabirion at Samothrace, as is clear from the numerous pottery and food remains excavated there: Ritual dining at Samothrace is discussed by Karl Lehmann, *Samothrace: A Guide to the Excavations and the Museum*. Locust Valley, N.Y.: Published for the Institute of Fine Arts J. J. Augustin, 1983. 53-9, 95-6; James R. McCredie, "Samothrace: Supplementary Investigations, 1968-1977," *Hesperia*, 48.1 (1979), pp. 1-44. 8-44 (discussing the stoa, which seems to have been used as a dining area); and Cole, *Theoi Megaloi*, 36-7. The bulk of the pottery from Samothrace is plainware, and includes cups of the distinctive kantharos shape also found at the Kabirion near Thebes, perhaps revealing a direct connection between the sanctuaries: on these kantharoi, see Karl Lehmann, "Samothrace: Fifth Preliminary Report," *Hesperia*, 21.1 (1952), pp. 19-43. 36-37; and Iris C. Love, "Ceramics," in *Samothrace 4.1, The Hall of Votive Gifts*, ed. Karl Lehmann. New York: Pantheon Books, 1962. pp. 115-146. 117. The excavators also found decorated vases, including a few kraters imported from Attica; unlike the locally-made plainware items, which seem to have been ceremoniously broken, these imports were reused and even

closely associated with such rites. Their imagery, especially the scenes of hilarious revelers, shows that the Kabirion rites were characterized by a general comic atmosphere. This type of hilarity may have extended, carnival-like, over the whole festival, or may have been confined to certain moments during the ritual, such as the symposia.

The relation of such humorous activity to the Kabirion cult is difficult to understand. The vases are the only evidence for it in the Theben Kabirion, while the other Kabirion sanctuaries can offer only one helpful inscription – a fragmentary engraved marble plaque from the Kabirion on Lemnos containing a dedication to the god who

repaired: on the vases from Samothrace, see Love, “Ceramics”; Iris C. Love, “Ceramics,” in *Samothrace* 3.2, *The Hieron*, ed. Karl Lehmann. New York: Pantheon Books, 1969. pp. 145-236; Mary B. Moore, “Attic Black Figure from Samothrace,” *Hesperia*, 44.2 (1975), pp. 234-250; Elsbeth B. Dusenbery, “Two Attic Red-Figured Kraters in Samothrace,” *Hesperia*, 47.3 (1978), pp. 211-243; Anastasia N. Dinsmoor, “Red-Figured Pottery from Samothrace,” *Hesperia*, 61.4 (1992), pp. 501-515. Some of the Attic kraters have Dionysiac and theatrical scenes, but so few of these exist that it is unwise to draw from them a special connection of Dionysos to the Kabiroi here as well as at Thebes; still, it must have been true that the dedication of Dionysiac scenes was appropriate: one example is Samothrace, Archaeological Museum, 65.1041. On these Attic imports, see Moore, “Attic Black Figure from Samothrace”; and Dinsmoor, “Red-Figured Pottery from Samothrace.”

One fragment of an Attic krater found in the sanctuary at Samothrace worthy of special note shows a pair of fat men reclining during what should be a symposium: Samothrace, no inv. no. Dusenbery, “Two Attic Red-Figured Kraters in Samothrace,” pl. 60b and 240-243. Such unflattering anatomical realism is rare in Attic vase-painting. Dusenbery, attributing the fragment to Hermonax, proposed that the scene is perhaps humorous – a quality demonstrated by Hermonax in other vases. Humorousness of the Samothrace fragment: Dusenbery, “Two Attic Red-Figured Kraters in Samothrace,” 243. Humorousness of Hermonax: F.P. Johnson, “A Pelike Painted by Hermonax,” in *Classical Studies in Honor of William Abbott Oldfather*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1943. pp. 73-81. pp. 79-80. If the scene is humorous at the expense of the symposiasts, it is very similar to the caricatured symposiasts of Kabirion ware. This Samothrace fragment is, so far, an unique example, and the complications of its being an import make it impossible to draw any conclusions about the possible existence of humorous imagery in the Samothracian cult.

‘jests by the way,’ *parapaizonti*.³³³ Perrot and Chipiez thought that the Kabirion vases were the product of a joke-filled celebration, like the Dionysiac *phallika*, phallic procession.³³⁴ Lapalus, the scholar to have more thoroughly attempted to explain the specific links between the Kabirion ware images and cult, suggested that their humor was intended to please a fun-loving, Dionysiac god.³³⁵ Similarly, Mitchell imagines the

³³³ Twelve fragments of an engraved marble plaque, published in Werner Peek, *Griechische Vers-Inschriften*, vol. I: *Grab-Epigramme*. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1955. no. 1029, p. 289-290; analyzed in Simone Follet, “Deux vocables religieux rares attestés épigraphiquement,” *RPh*, 48 (1974), pp. 30-34. 32-4; applied to the Theban Kabirion by Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 258.

³³⁴ Georges Perrot and Charles Chipiez, *Histoire de l’art dans l’antiquité*. Paris: Hachette et Cie, 1882-1914. 302.

³³⁵ Lapalus, “Parodies de thèmes héroïques”; and “Vases Cabiriques du Musée National d’Athènes,” *RA*, 6th series, 6, (1935), pp. 8-28.
 Fun-loving god: “Parodies de thèmes héroïques,” 85.
 Of the scene of Odysseus on an amphora-raft, Lapalus argued that it closely recalled Homer’s *Odyssey*, 5.262ff, with, for example, the unequal size of the painted amphorae an illustration of the skin wine and larger skin of water that Kalypso gives to Odysseus upon his embarkation, with the vase-painter having taken the liberty of turning skins into amphorae and imagining that Odysseus used these to make a raft after the storm that destroyed his boat: “Parodies de thèmes héroïques,” 65-70. Lapalus suggested that the scene of Odysseus’ journey might have a religious, Orphic significance, especially because a scholiast on Apollonius Rhodius claims that initiation at Kabirion of Samothrace promised to protect sailors, and that Odysseus had been initiated there (Schol. on Apollod. Rh. I.917). Thus, the figure of Odysseus escaping the dangers of the sea could be a sort of *hieros logos* to be reviled during the mysteries, though Lapalus argued that Odysseus was celebrated during the mysteries, in the *dromena*, and that the vase is a parody of such serious ritual, not a reflection of what went on onstage. Lapalus similarly claims that the scenes of Kirke preparing her potion for Odysseus is a parody of the cultic role of *kykeon*, the beverage consumed by Demeter and then by initiates in Demetrian mysteries, though there is no evidence for its use in the Kabirion: “Parodies de thèmes héroïques,” 70-74. Lapalus explained the burlesques of Bellerophon and Chimera and that of the traveler frightened by a snake, whom he identifies as Kadmus, by positing that Kadmus and Bellerophon, like Odysseus, were celebrated in the Kabirion ritual: “Parodies de thèmes héroïques,” 76-79. He also thought that the burlesque scene of Achilles presented to Chiron had religious significance, perhaps because of respectable character of Chiron: “Parodies de thèmes héroïques,” 80-81. Lapalus did admit his difficulty in finding a link between the mysteries and the Kabirion vases’ fondness for

Kabirion sanctuary as home to an annual carnival-like feast “when one could mock without distinction the Kabirion worshippers, mythical heroes, and generally speaking everyone,” since Kabirios, like Dionysos, must have appreciated jokes.³³⁶ Burkert, looking at the images on Kabirion ware, suggested that that one phase of the initiation into or celebration of the mysteries at the Kabirion was a “descent into the primitive,” in which the celebrant would act in ways not permitted under normal social norms; he compares (as we will soon do) this moment of license to the rituals of the abuse “from the wagons” at the Anthesteria or the ritual joking of Demeter festivals.³³⁷

None of the above interpretations of the Kabirion images can be considered definite explanations, for they rest on too little evidence. The imagery of the vases is detailed and fascinating, and the archeological facts about their use are plentiful - but these sources of information simply do not combine into unassailable explanations. One

scenes of pygmies fighting cranes: “Parodies de thèmes héroïques,” 81-82. (A similar insistent attempt to link vase imagery with mystery religion is that of James Christie’s *Disquisitions upon the Painted Greek Vases, and Their Probable connection with the Shows of the Eleusian and Other Mysteries*. London: Longman and Co., 1825.) Many of Lapalus’ assertions about the cultic ritual underlying the Kabirion imagery are unconvincing. The Kabirion vases’ humorous treatment of serious myth is importantly different from the inclusion of humorous episodes within serious myths, such as that of Iambe within the Demeter story. The Kabirion scenes are parodies, and as such cannot be assimilated to the cultic inclusion of humorous episodes of narrative significance in the Eleusinian mysteries. Secondly, if the vase scenes are burlesques of myths of religious significance, this would be to suppose the existence a far greater number of leading religious figures within the Kabirion cult than is usual for Greek sanctuaries, which usually are dedicated to the celebration of only a few gods. In the end, then, Lapalus’ argument for the direct connection of the subjects of all of the Kabirion burlesque scenes to the cult of the sanctuary seems untenable.

³³⁶ Mitchell, *Comic Pictures in Greek Vase-painting*, 188-189.

³³⁷ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 282.

way to overcome this difficulty is to apply comparative evidence, examining similarly humorous images found in other Greek sanctuaries.

Anthesteria and Sam Wide Group Vases

Kabirion ware most clearly connects humorous imagery with cultic activity, thanks to the find-spots of the cups. However, two other roughly contemporary groups of Greek vases also feature humorous imagery and also are connectable to cultic contests: the vases connected to the Athenian Anthesteria festival and the Corinthian vases known as the Sam Wide Group. Their similarity with the Kabirion examples has been noted, but never systematically explored.³³⁸ The link between Anthesteria vases and Kabirion ware extends to the finding of some Anthesteria vases in the Kabirion, as well as some Boeotian imitations of Anthesteria vases.³³⁹ Thus, this chapter describes the Anthesteria and Sam Wide vases and their associated cults. The end of this chapter will summarize the common strategies of parodic humor seen on the Kabirion, Anthesteria, and Sam Wide vases.

I will argue that all three types of vases were used for similar types of rituals. The following chapters will explore just what these rituals might have been.

Anthesteria

The Athenian festival of the Anthesteria was a Dionysiac celebration held in late February, when the *pithoi* of the wine matured from the last autumn's vintage were opened; the three days of the festival were marked by feasting, drinking contests, and

³³⁸ The relationship has been noted by G. van Hoorn, *Choes and Anthesteria*. Leiden: Brill, 1951, no. 64.

³³⁹ Athenian Anthesteria choes found in the Kabirion: van Hoorn no. 79, 80, 83. Boeotian imitations of Anthesteria choes: van Hoorn no. 341, 543, 523-92. van Hoorn also notes that both the choes and the Kabirion vases feature similar scenes of acrobats dancing on tables and children pulled in goat-carts: van Hoorn, *Choes and Anthesteria*. 52.

various other rituals, most described only in late sources.³⁴⁰ A special type of oinochoe, named a chous by modern scholars, was produced for the festival; it has a low foot, trefoil lip, bulging profile, and characteristic iconography which includes comic scenes.

The Festival

The three days of the Anthesteria were called “Jar-opening” (*Pithoigia*), “Jugs” (*Choes*), and “Pots” (*Chytroi*).³⁴¹ On the first day, the 11th day of the month Anthesterion, jars of new wine were opened at the sanctuary of Dionysos in Limnai, with libations offered to the god.³⁴²

There was a drinking contest on the second day, in which citizens competed to empty choes-full of wine. Aristophanes’ *Acharnians* describes the contest (959-1234).

³⁴⁰ Important ancient sources on the Anthesteria festival include: Plutarch, *Moralia*, 655e, 735d; Aristophanes, *Acharnians*, 96, 1211, 1076; Aristophanes, *Frogs*, 218.

³⁴¹ Important ancient sources on the Anthesteria festival include: Plutarch, *Moralia*, 655e, 735d; Aristophanes, *Acharnians*, 96, 1211, 1076; Aristophanes, *Frogs*, 218. The most recent survey and discussion of the evidence is that of Hamilton, *Choes and Anthesteria*. The most recent attempt to understand what actually happened during the festival is that of Noel Robertson, “Athens’ Festival of the New Wine,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 95 (1993), pp. 197-250. Major past contributions include M.P. Nilsson, “Die Anthesterien und die Aiora,” *Eranos* 15 (1915) = *Opuscula Selecta* vol. 1 (Lund 1951), 145-65; H.R. Immerwahr, “Choes and Chytroi,” *TAPA* 77 (1956), pp. 245-60; K. Friis Johanssen, “Am Chytrentag,” *Acta Archaeologica* 38 (1967), pp. 175-198; N.W. Slater, “The Lenaeon Theater,” *ZPE* 66 (1986), 255-64. A complete list of sources for the Anthesteria are given both in the original and in translation and discussed in Hamilton, *Choes and Anthesteria*.

Robertson points out that this three-day arrangement is quite normal, since both the Athenian Thesmophoria and the Apaturia were three-day festivals with individually-named days. Robertson, “Athens’ Festival of the New Wine,” 198.

³⁴² The ceremony is described in several sources, with the location specified in Athenaeus 11.465a. This sanctuary has not so far been identified.

The winner received some sort of prize, and the contestants dedicated their jugs at the Limnai shrine.³⁴³

The rituals of the third day, the Chytroi, are uncertain. Celebrants probably boiled a pot (*chytra*) of meal and made a sacrifice to either Chthonic Hermes or to both Chthonic Hermes and Dionysos, with prayers about the dead.³⁴⁴

³⁴³ Some sources give an aetiology of this contest, explaining that when Orestes was received in Athens after he had killed his mother, the citizens would not eat at the same table with him, but instead set up individual tables, all drinking in silence from individual jugs of wine, and this arrangement became a customary festival. The earliest source for this aetiology is Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* (947ff), and scholars tend to agree that it is more of an attempt on Euripides' part to rewrite traditional mythology than an actual explanation for the festival, which seems a joyous one in Aristophanes' description. See Hamilton, *Choes and Anthesteria*, 25 and also his earlier article, "Prologue, Prophecy and Plot in Four Plays of Euripides," *AJP* 99 (1978), pp. 283-86.

Several other late sources mention gloomier rituals for the Choes, describing the chewing of buckthorn and smearing doorframes with pitch to drive away the spirits of the dead, who were supposed to come among the living on this day: Photius, *s.v. miara hemera*; Hesychius, *s.v. miarai hemerai*; and Photius, *s.v. ramnos*. See also Hamilton, *Choes and Anthesteria*, 27-33. Some scholars point out the lateness and paucity of these sources and doubt that such rituals would have fit into a festival so celebratory as the Anthesteria otherwise seems to be; others, like Burkert, accept that "this day of homely merriment is nonetheless a day of defilement." *Greek Religion*, 237-241. Scholars doubting gloomy rituals: see Hamilton, *Choes and Anthesteria*, 26-27. Burkert, who follows the Euripidean aetiology of the drinking contests, thinks that the Anthesteria had a "deep structure" of "catastrophe, guilt, and atonement," evinced both in the gay and gloomy aspects of its ritual. *Greek Religion*, 241. Many testimonials show the conjunction of celebratory feasting and ritual laughter with funerals or ceremonies to propitiate the dead in other cultures, as will be seen in the discussion of anthropological comparisons for Greek ritual laughter later in this dissertation. Thus, the idea that the Anthesteria may have been a festival involving both a celebration of wine and the propitiation or avoidance of the dead cannot be rejected out of hand, even if Burkert's explanation is perhaps overly psychological.

³⁴⁴ This is the explanation put forth by Robertson, "Athens' Festival of the New Wine," 201. Robertson believes that the vessels celebrated on this day were actually those of the shape now known as stamnoi, which we often see in vase-painting as the vessels used for ritual mixing of wine and water. One of the other events attributed by later authors to this third day of the Anthesteria is the expelling of someone or something at the end of it with the formula "Out of the house, you *Keres*!" It is impossible to tell if the phrase refers to some sort of spirit (*keres*) or to Carians, perhaps, since there were Carian slaves in

Also during the Anthesteria, though it is unclear on which day, the head archon and his wife reenacted the *hieros gamos* of Dionysos and Ariadne.³⁴⁵

Ritual laughter occurred throughout the Anthesteria. There was a comedic theatrical performance during the Chytroi.³⁴⁶ Singers called *ithyphalloi*, costumed as drunkards and wearing wreaths and luxurious clothing, sang and danced in processions and in the theater.³⁴⁷ The Anthesteria also featured mockery “from the wagons” (*ek ton hamazon*), during which some festival participants piled into wagons and then mocked and joked with the crowd. Sources place this activity during the second day of the festival, presumably in conjunction with this day’s drinking festival.³⁴⁸ The Anthesteria

Athens, as a synecdoche for slaves as a body, since they had been celebrating the festival and had to be told to go back to work. The problem is probably insolvable: see the discussion in Robertson, “Athens’ Festival of the New Wine,” 203-205. In all, the sources for the third day are late scholiasts and compilers; some modern commentators believe that one of them transported the details of a ritual during the festival Pyanopsia in order to explain the day name in Aristophanes, and that accordingly we really have little idea of what actually happened on this day.

³⁴⁵ Robertson thinks that the *hieros gamos* must have taken place on the first day of the festival, “so that the new wine may be infused with the same zest,” but the sources do not specify the actual timing of the ritual. Robertson, “Athens’ Festival of the New Wine,” 214.

³⁴⁶ For these sources, see Hamilton, *Choes and Anthesteria*, 38-42.

³⁴⁷ For sources on the *ithyphalloi*, see Hans Herter, *De dis atticis Priapi similibus*. Bonn: Typis Scheur Fratrum Typographorum Academicorum, 1926. 48-55; and also his *Vom dionysischen Tanz zum komischen Spiel*. Iserlohn: Silva-Verlag, 1947. 16-22, 29-33, 37-39.

³⁴⁸ Photius, s.v. *ta ek ton hamazon* and Suda, s.v. *ta ek ton hamazon skommaton*. Hamilton is reluctant to trust these sources absolutely, arguing that these late authors might be confusing the Anthesteria with the Lenaia festival, to which more reliable sources ascribe similar mockery from wagons. *Choes and Anthesteria*, 27. Hamilton points out that at least one source, the schol. to Aristophanes *Ach.* 961, confuses the Limnaion of the Anthesteria festival with the Lenaion of the Lenaia, suggesting that the two festivals might have become conflated in the mind of late antiquity. However, since

mockery “from the wagons” probably took a form similar to the general Dionysiac festivity described in Plato’s *Laws*:

Indeed there is not a [Spartan] man who would not punish at once and most severely any drunken reveler he chanced to meet with, nor would even the feast of Dionysus serve as an excuse to save him--a revel such as I once upon a time witnessed “on the wagons” in your country; and at our colony of Tarentum, too, saw the whole city drunk at the Dionysia.³⁴⁹

The Choes

The Anthesteria drinking contest was a competition to empty a chous-full, and scholars have identified a shape of vase as a chous through descriptions, find-spots, and iconography. A relatively large number of choes are known – more than 1000 - but some of these are found so far afield – as Kertsch ware, for instance – or with clearly different iconographies – as in South Italy – that they could have had little connection to the Anthesteria. Scholars usually divide choes into two groups, the “small” choes, under 10.5cm tall, and the “large” choes, over 10.5cm. This division in scale is paralleled by a division in subject matter.

The same images recur on the small choes – children, toys, sacrificial cakes, and so on, most of which seem to be reflections of items and activities connected with the

numerous other, more reliable sources describing humorous activities during all varieties of Dionysiac festivals, it seems reasonable to conclude that ritual humor also took place during the Anthesteria, especially alongside its other humorous rituals – the comedic spectacles and the *ithyphalloi* - e.g., Plato, *Laws*, 637a and Schol. Luc., *Dialogue of the Courtesans* 7.4.

Some scholars, confident that mockery “from the wagons” did happen during the Anthesteria, attempt to identify the occasion or location – for example, during the procession of the *hieros gamos* – but there is no evidence for any such specificities: Ludwig Deubner, *Attische Feste*. Berlin: H. Keller, 1932; H. W. Parke, *Festivals of the Athenians*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977; M. Guarducci, “Dioniso sposo della regina,” *NAC* 11 (1982), pp. 33-46. For a discussion of these citations, see Hamilton, 27 and n. 63.

³⁴⁹ Plato, *Laws*, 637a.

Anthesteria festival as we know it from the literary sources.³⁵⁰ The small capacity of these choes and their images of children once meant that scholars thought they were children's toys. Hamilton recently convincingly argued that we should not assume this, since small choes excavated from Athenian cemeteries are found equally in adult graves as child graves.³⁵¹ The small choes were thus more probably souvenirs of the festival, since celebrants were supposed to dedicate the larger choes used for the drinking contest in Dionysos' sanctuary.

The larger choes hold a more substantial amount of wine, and tend to feature other subjects, mostly mythological, which scholars do not generally consider to have been related to the festival since, unlike the smaller choes, these scenes do not illustrate actual events from the festival.³⁵² By contrast, I argue that the larger choes were produced for the festival. They do not have a one-to-one correspondence of imagery with festival events, but neither did the Kabirion images, which are related to that sanctuary's festivals by their comic spirit rather than through any specific similarities of items or deities. The Anthesteria featured humor-driven ritual as comedic spectacles, *ithyphalloi*, and mockery

³⁵⁰ See Hamilton, 113-121, for a discussion of the iconography of the small choes.

³⁵¹ See Hamilton, 113-121, for a discussion of the iconography of the small choes.

³⁵² Hamilton details the history of these disputes about which types of choes are related to the festival in his *Choes and Anthesteria: Athenian Iconography and Ritual*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992. 62-81. Some of the more important contributions to this issue are those of A. Rumpf, "Attische Feste-Attische Vasen," *Bonner Jahrbücher* 161 (1961), pp. 208-14; J.R. Green, "Choes of the Later Fifth Century," *BSA* 66 (1971), pp. 189-228; J.R. Green, "Oinochoe," *BISCA* 19 (1972), pp. 1-16; J. Bazant, "Iconography of Choes Reconsidered," *Listy Filologicke* 98 (1975), 72-78; E.M. Stern, "Kinderkannchen zum Choenfest," *Castrum Peregrini* 132/3 (1978), pp. 27-37; E.R. Knauer, "A Chous by the Oinokles Painter," *Greek Vases in the J. Paul Getty Museum* 3 (1986), pp. 91-100.

“from the wagons,” and the large choes, with their humorous imagery, mirrored and amplified this humor.

The Anthesteria choes using a caricatural drawing style include a caricature of a reveler, very similar to the Kabirion grotesque revelers.³⁵³ (fig. 4.1) A chous fragment shows a dwarf or grotesque man playing pipes.³⁵⁴ An interesting instance of the grotesque body is the Anthesteria chous with a grotesque actor, perhaps a dwarf, costumed evidently as Perseus with a sickle, dancing on stage.³⁵⁵ (fig. 4.2) This is one of the very few Attic vases to show theatrical equipment, and would seem to indicate comic performances during the festival, though, since the onlookers here sit in normal household chairs, this might be a scene of a small-scale farce rather than city-wide theatrical Comedy.

The Anthesteria vases also featured comic scenes painted in a non-grotesque style, often with satyrs. One scene is of a satyr surprising a woman.³⁵⁶ (fig. 4.3) Another non-grotesque comic scene shows a woman (wife or prostitute?) timidly preparing to open her door to the urgent summons of a drunken man.³⁵⁷ (fig. 4.4) A satyr with a monster, part ass, is in the same family of comic horrors as the ogress on a Kabirion

³⁵³ Dresden, Staatl. Kunstsammlungen, Albertinum, ZV1827, BA # 16395.

³⁵⁴ Athens, Agora Museum, P15116, BA # 7761.

³⁵⁵ Athens, coll. Vastos. Bieber, *History of the Greek and Roman Theater*, 48-49.

³⁵⁶ Athens, NM, 1221.

³⁵⁷ New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 37.11.19, BA # 539.

vase.³⁵⁸ (fig. 4.5) A scene of mules copulating might also be counted as humorous.³⁵⁹
(fig. 4.6)

There are also some internal parodies by satyrs, where satyr-children play the roles of Athenian citizen children celebrating the festival.³⁶⁰ On other examples, satyrs engage in humorous antics: on one, Dionysos punishes a satyr with a sandal, apparently for the sin of having broken the vase which lies beneath them; on another fragment, a satyr dances wearing ‘falsies’ – costumed as a maenad, perhaps.³⁶¹ (fig. 4.7-4.8)

Like the Kabirion vases, the larger Anthesteria choes feature scenes of mythological parody. One Anthesteria chous shows a satyr, equipped with cape and club, entering into battle with a snake guarding a tree hung with wine-jugs.³⁶² (fig. 4.9) This is a parody of Herakles in search of the apples of the Hesperides, with both the hero and the object of his desire changed. The style is very different from the Kabirion mythological parodies, but the intent – of poking fun at a hero – is the same.³⁶³

³⁵⁸ Karlsruhe, Badisches Landesmuseum, W214.

³⁵⁹ Munich, Antikensammlungen, 2469, BA # 213228.

³⁶⁰ For example, a torch race of infant satyrs on Berlin, Antikensammlung, 1962.33, BA # 275288; or a satyr offering a drinking horn and a cake to a satyr boy on Athens, Museum for Cycladic and Archaic Art, 751, BA # 15413.

³⁶¹ Punished satyr: Berlin, Private coll., BA # 2725. Karl Anton Neugebauer, *Antiken in deutschem Privatbesitz*. Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1938. 178. Satyr costumed as maenad: Athens, National Museum, 1220, BA # 7664.

³⁶² London, BM, E539, BA # 209570. On this vase, see Francois Lissarague, “Satyres, Sérieux S’Abstenir,” in *Le rire des Grecs: anthropologie du rire en Grèce ancienne*. Ed. Marie-Laurence Desclos. Grenoble: Millon, 2000. pp. 109-119. 117-118.

³⁶³ The same arguments against the subject being an illustration of a theatrical event also apply, since, though the parody of heroic action by a satyr might suggest a satyr play, we

Another fragmentary example has another parody scene, of Oedipus and the Sphinx.³⁶⁴ (fig. 4.10). The relative positions of the two characters are as usual, but their bodies have changed: the Sphinx has a lizard tail and a dog's head, with exaggerated ears and a long beard, while Oedipus' normal clothing only partially conceals the fact that he has a dog's hind legs and tail – which competes with an oversized, bulgingly phallic sword.³⁶⁵ The specific gist of the parody is unclear, but that it is one is certain.

Besides the more obvious mythological parodies discussed in the introduction, Karouzou has identified as another parody a small chous now in Athens.³⁶⁶ (fig. 4.11) It shows a seated and filleted figure, holding out an oinochoe, and looking at another figure, naked except for a cloak, who rushes towards him from the right. Karouzou identified both of the figures as children, though they may also be grotesque adults without weakening the ultimate interpretation of the scene as a parody. On the left, another standing figure, which seems also to be a child, wearing the body-costume of a comic

know that mythological heroes were dressed in “normal” costume during satyr plays, and were accompanied by, not played by, satyrs. Mitchell proposes that this parody does not “harm” Herakles, but rather mocks the satyr, but since Herakles is so often the target of mockery in both Greek comic literature and art, it would seem that this chous is no exception: Alexandre Mitchell, “Humour in Greek Vase-Painting in the Sixth and Fifth Centuries BC.” *Revue Archéologique* (2004), pp. 3-32. 31.

³⁶⁴ Berlin, Antikensammlung, 3186, BA # 12551. van Hoorn called it a chous, and included it in his catalogue of Anthesteria ware, arguing that the stylistic differences of this vase from the other Attic chous are due to a choice to treat the Boeotian myth in a Boeotian caricature style, but other scholars have debated whether it is Attic or Boeotian. van Hoorn, no. 338. The Beazley Archive, following the CVA, lists this chous as Attic: BA no. 12551. Boardman writes that it “may be Boeotian,” but does not think it related to Kabirion ware. “A Sam Wide Group Cup in Oxford,” *JHS*, 90 (1970), pp. 194-195. 195. If it is Boeotian, it could be a Boeotian imitation of the Attic Anthesteria chous, and so it is still appropriate to include it here.

³⁶⁵ For this description, see Boardman, “A Sam Wide Group Cup,” 195.

³⁶⁶ Athens, National Museum, 17752, BA # 15483. Semni Papaspyridi Karouzou, “Chous,” *AJA*, 50.1 (1946), pp. 122-139. 134-137.

actor, complete with phallus and a mask with swollen features. Karouzou, thinking that the object that the right-hand child holds is a snake, reads it as a Fury, and thinks of the scene as a parody of the story of Orestes, acted by children during the Anthesteria, with the costumed figure perhaps as the leader of the chorus. Whether or not this interpretation is acceptable, the chous is still striking, if only for being one of the few instances in Attic vase-painting of a grotesquely costumed comic figure (although here the decision of whether the painter has intended to show a costume or just contorted flesh is difficult). Whatever the scene may be, its general comicity points accords with the other examples of humorous imagery on Anthesteria choes.

Another group of chous-like oinochoe with comic imagery are the unglazed oinochoe with polychrome decoration found in a well in the Athenian Agora.³⁶⁷ They were published by Crosby in 1955, and even though she proposed a connection with the Anthesteria, they have been largely ignored by subsequent scholars of this festival. They show caricatured figures, some engaging in clearly comical situations which may have reflected or been influenced by Athenian Comedy. The first has an inscription “Tyro and her sons,” and may be an illustration of the recognition scene from Sophocles’ *Tyro*.³⁶⁸ (fig. 4.12) Only a shaggy-haired and wild-eyed head remains to indicate the caricatural tone of the lost pieces. Another oinochoe has a single figure, a dancing komast wearing a fillet, carrying a staff and with a large oinochoe hanging from his arm.³⁶⁹ (fig. 4.13) The

³⁶⁷ Margaret Crosby, “Five Comic Scenes from Athens,” *Hesperia*, 24.1 (1955), pp. 76-84.

³⁶⁸ Agora Inv. P 23856, BA # 9016743.

³⁶⁹ Agora Inv. P 23900.

komast's posture is a silly prance, and his belly is exaggerated. Crosby thought that his oinochoe indicated that he is celebrating the Anthesteria.³⁷⁰ A third oinochoe shows two bearded men, both with exaggerated noses and lips, carrying a white object on a spit.³⁷¹ (fig. 4.14) Crosby suggested that this object is an *obelias* cake, which was baked on a spit and carried by *obeliaphoroi* in processions in honor of Dionysos.³⁷² van Hoorn identified other *obelias* cakes on Anthesteria choes, and so the comic figures on this oinochoe could be related to the Anthesteria.³⁷³ On another of the oinochoe, two grotesque, obese figures face each other, with some sort of object between them – Crosby suggests a dog.³⁷⁴ (fig. 4.15) The figures were labeled, though only part of the inscriptions remain: “*onysos*” for the left-hand figure – this is easily [Di]onyusos – and “*Phor*” as the beginning of the name of the right-hand figure, for which no obvious

³⁷⁰ Crosby, “Five Comic Scenes,” 80.

³⁷¹ Agora Inv. P 23907. There is a similar scene of *obeliaphoroi* on an early 4th c. BCE phylax bell-krater in Leningrad. Crosby makes of this that “[t]he fact that we have both an Athenian and a South Italian copy of the scene suggests that it represents a comedy or perhaps informal farce rather than merely two *obeliaphoroi* from a procession.” Crosby, 81. Following scholars have generally accepted this link and the subsequent conclusion that there was at least some transfer of comic imagery from Attica to South Italy; however, it is not difficult to imagine that the two painters independently arrived at similar scenes, since there are not too many different positions in which two men can carry a spit. In fact, given this compositional restraint, the scenes are almost as different as they can be, since the men in the Attic example carry the spit across their shoulders, while the South Italian figures hoist it above their heads.

³⁷² Crosby, “Five Comic Scenes,” 80. *Obeliaphoroi* in the City Dionysia: Athenaeus 3.111b.

³⁷³ van Hoorn, *Choes and Anthesteria*, 42.

³⁷⁴ Agora Inv. P 23985, BA # 9016744.

emendation presents itself.³⁷⁵ Crosby accepted the figure labeled Dionysos as the god himself, but Dionysos was also a name for mortals, and so we might equally think the figure merely a comic human and not necessarily a god. The last oinochoe of the group features a grotesquely fat man rowing a fish.³⁷⁶ (fig. 4.16) Crosby suggests a number of possible identifications, but concludes that it is not possible to specifically identify the rower. It is probably not necessary to do so, since generic images of man rowing fish appear in comic popular art even today.³⁷⁷

Two of the polychrome oinochoe have painted ivy wreaths around their necks, very similar to the painted wreaths on other Anthesteria choes.³⁷⁸ The polychrome reveler is similar to the one already discussed on the Anthesteria choes in Dresden, and we have already seen the possible connection of *obeliaphoroi* to the Anthesteria

³⁷⁵ Crosby was able to find only one proper name beginning with Phor- among the surviving characters associated with Dionysos – Phormio, the name of an Athenian general in Eupolis' *Taxiarchoi* who gives Dionysos lessons in strategy. She admits that this restoration is only a possibility. Crosby, "Five Comic Scenes," 81. For Phormio, see Schol. Aristophanes, *Peace*, 347 = Koch, *CAF*, I, 325.

³⁷⁶ British Museum, 98.2-27.1. The vase was not found in the Agora, but was purchased in Athens; in all physical and stylistic characteristics it belongs with the others.

³⁷⁷ Crosby considers possible identifications as Arion (rejected because of lack of lyre), Melikertes and Palaemon (rejected because of lack of connection to Athens or to the theater), one of the sailors transformed by Dionysos (rejected by comparison with the iconography of this transformation elsewhere) or Theseus on his trip to the bottom of the sea. Crosby, "Five Comic Scenes," 83. Crosby also considers the fish-rower to be closely paralleled by a comic actor riding on a dolphin on a now-lost phylax vase (Bieber, H.T., p. 275, fig. 372), but, as with the *obeliaphoroi* images, the similarities seem more due to similar ideas and compositional restraints than actual direct influence, especially because the Athenian figure is rowing, while the South Italian one merely rides his fish.

³⁷⁸ Crosby, "Five Comic Scenes," 84.

festival and its iconography.³⁷⁹ If, as has been argued, comic imagery was a common feature of Anthesteria vases, these polychrome oinochoe should be linked to the festival, despite the small difference in shape.

Sam Wide Group

The Vases

The last group of images of interest to this dissertation are those painted in around the mid 5th century BCE by either a single painter or a quite homogenous workshop in Corinth and known, after their first scholar, as the “Sam Wide Group.”³⁸⁰ (fig. 4.17-4.22)

³⁷⁹ Dresden, Staatl. Kunstsammlungen, Albertinum, ZV1827, BA # 16395.

³⁸⁰ Wide first collected instances of the type in *AM* 26 (1901), pp. 143-156. He identified them as Boeotian, partially because of the British Museum’s examples were reputed to have been found in Tanagra and also because of what he saw as a stylistic connection to Kabirion Ware. Pfuhl followed this identification: Ernst Pfuhl, *Meisterwerke griechischer Zeichnung und Malerei*. Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1924. 714-715. In a first article on the group, Ure also accepted the Boeotian ascription: A. D. Ure, “Boeotian Haloa,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 69 (1949), pp. 18-24. Soon after this publication, fragments of Sam Wide Group vessels were excavated in the Potter’s Quarter in Corinth, and it became clear that they were all of Corinthian manufacture: A. D. Ure, “The God with the Winnowing-Fan,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 72 (1952), p. 121; these fragments received their official publication much later, in Agnes N. Stillwell, “Appendix III: The Sam Wide Workshop,” in *The Potters’ Quarter: The Pottery*, ed. Agnes N. Stillwell and J. L. Benson. *Corinth*, vol. 15.3. Princeton, N.J.: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1984. pp. 368-371. Other fragments from the Group were found in the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore on the slope of the Acrocorinth: Ronald S. Stroud, “The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore on Acrocorinth: Preliminary Report II: 1964-1965,” *Hesperia*, 37. 3 (1968), pp. 299-330. 302-303; Nancy Bookidis and Joan E. Fisher, “Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore on Acrocorinth: Preliminary Report V: 1971-1973,” *Hesperia*, 43.3 (1974), pp. 267-307. 290-291; M.K. Risser, “Corinthian Archaic and Classical Pottery: The Local Style,” in *Corinth: The centenary, 1896-1996*, ed. Charles K. Williams II and Nancy Bookidis. *Corinth*, vol. 20. Princeton, N.J.: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2003. pp. 157-165. 161–164. Risser explains the difficulties in dating the Group, since all examples have so far been found in late contexts or general fills, and accordingly cannot be closely dated. The *terminus ante quem* is provided by one piece found in a late 5th c. context. Stylistically, the Group can be dated as contemporary to the

Thirty examples of this Group are known.³⁸¹ Most are fragmentary, but all are easily identifiable by their drawing style: figures painted in outline with stippling but little use of incision. This style is comparable to other Corinthian products.

What is unusual is the humorousness of this style. The poses of figures by the Group painter or painters are awkward, the limbs chubby, the heads either a little too big or completely outsized: see, for example, Boardman's "comic figure" on an example in Athens.³⁸² (fig. 4.17) The painters did not hesitate to apply this style to gods and heroes – the comic figure of the last vase holds a club, and is thus probably identifiable as Herakles. Stillwell summarizes the effect as "levity without irreverence."³⁸³ The Herakles

Vrysoula Workshop (c. 450-410 BCE). Also on the Group, see: *CVA* Oxford ii, p. 65, no. 32 (J.D. Beazley, H.G.G. Payne, E.R. Price); *CVA* Reading I, p. 27 (P.N. and A.D. Ure); Jane Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1908. 275; Gisela Richter, *Ancient Furniture: A History of Greek, Etruscan and Roman Furniture*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926; Arthur Lane, *Greek Pottery*. London: Faber and Faber, 1948. 57, pl. 95a; Denise Callipolitis-Feytmans, "Évolution du Plat Corinthien," *BCH*, 86 (1962), pp. 117-164. On the Sam Wide Group, see pp. 141-143, 163-164; A. D. Ure, "A Corinthian Cup and a Euboean Lekythos," *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 88 (1968), pp. 140-141; D.A. Amyx, *Corinthian Vase-Painting of the Archaic Period*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988. 275-276; Boardman, *Early Greek Vase Painting*, 257-258.

³⁸¹ A catalogue of all known examples is provided by D.A. Amyx, *Corinthian Vase-Painting of the Archaic Period*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988. 275-276. For similarities with other Corinthian manufactures, as well as an assessment of the stylistic relationship with Boeotian painting, see Stillwell, "Sam Wide Workshop." She concludes that the Kabirion painters were either influenced by the Corinthian or that they were both drawing from a common model.

³⁸² Athens, Goulandris Coll., 30.

³⁸³ Stillwell, "Sam Wide Workshop," 370.

may not be irreverent; even the centaur with a more strongly caricatured head, leering at a tortoise on a kylix in St. Petersburg, is not too mischievous.³⁸⁴ (fig. 4.21)

The kylix with a parodied Oedipus and the sphinx was by contrast most definitely painted with a humorous intent.³⁸⁵ (fig. 4.22) It shows a mostly-nude Oedipus holding a sword, with a painted area behind him which could either be his other arm, wrapped in a cloak and thrown up to shield himself, or merely a landscape feature.³⁸⁶ Oedipus is looking at a Sphinx seated on top of a column, but there the resemblance to normal scenes of Oedipus and the Sphinx ends. This Sphinx is male and, wearing what Boardman describes as a “comic expression of displeasure and violent concentration,” is masturbating. His penis almost as large again as himself (an oddly apt application of the principle of isoccephalism). Boardman suggests that the blob of paint beneath the tail of the Sphinx might indicate that it is, in its excitement, defecating.³⁸⁷ The scene is a

³⁸⁴ St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, B3138. See C. Borishovshaya in *Soobščeniya Gosudarstvennogo Ėrmitaža*, 36 (1973), pp. 40-41.

³⁸⁵ Oxford, private coll.; currently displayed in the Ashmolean Museum. This kylix first published by Boardman, “A Sam Wide Group Cup”; see also John Boardman, *Early Greek Vase Painting: 11th-6th centuries BC: A Handbook*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1998. 258; see also Boardman, *Early Greek Vase Painting*, 258; and E. L. Brown, “Cleon Caricatured on a Corinthian Cup,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 94 (1974), pp. 166-170.

³⁸⁶ Boardman explains the sword held by Oedipus as referring to the original version of the myth, in which Oedipus killed the Sphinx. Boardman, “A Sam Wide Group Cup,” 194.

³⁸⁷ Boardman, “A Sam Wide Group Cup,” 194.

The only subsequent attempt to elucidate the scene has been an article by Brown, who reads it as a parody not of the Sphinx, but of Cleon. The Sphinx was sometimes called a hound or dog, *kuon*, and Cleon was nicknamed *Kuwn*, “Dog,” either as a play on his name or because he propagandized himself as the watchdog of Athens. Cleon was fond of consulting oracles for political purposes (an activity satirized in the *Knights*, e.g. 61), which could be one reason for showing him as a Sphinx. Dogs were thought of by ancient

mythological parody, similar to the parody of Oedipus and the Sphinx on the Anthesteria oinochoe in Berlin.³⁸⁸ (fig. 4.22) The Sam Wide scene, like the Attic vase showing Hermes chasing Paris discussed in the second chapter, shows a mythological actor derailed from his proper train of action by a sudden attraction to the hero of the story.³⁸⁹ Oedipus, like Paris, was famously handsome, and the scene shows the Sphinx's fabled rapacious tastes for youths taking a different direction.³⁹⁰ This explanation could even provide a theory for why the Sphinx has here been turned from the female creature of the Oedipus myth to a very obvious male, since the Greeks would have thought that a male creature has a better right to love young boys.³⁹¹ Aeschylus wrote a satyr play titled *Sphinx* – perhaps it had similar jokes.³⁹²

Greeks as shameless, since they did everything in public, just, as Brown argues, as this sphinx is doing, adding that this might be parodying the openness of Cleon's negotiations with Sparta or his attempt to reform public morals. The figure of Oedipus, Brown suggests, could either signify "the entire opposition to Athens' imperialism under Cleon," or perhaps represent a specific figure such as Brasidas. "Cleon Caricatured," 166-170.

Ultimately, Brown's interpretation is unconvincing. Political caricature is common in Greek literature, but this would be the only surviving example on a vase. That the Athenians occasionally ridiculed Cleon is clear, but that a *Corinthian* painter would turn from his other subjects to parody an Athenian politician seems more doubtful. The cup, which has no provenance, is well-preserved, indicating that it came from a tomb, which is not usually a place for the cherishing of short-lived political propaganda. Above all, the connection of the Sphinx and Cleon through a common epithet is weak – the Greeks preferred to mock their leaders under the scantiest of disguises.

³⁸⁸ Berlin, Antikensammlung, 3186, BA # 12551.

³⁸⁹ Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, 373, BA # 207545.

³⁹⁰ Or perhaps not such a different direction – Vermeule has pointed out the erotic overtones of the myth and images of the Sphinx. *Aspects of Death*, 171-174.

³⁹¹ For the tendency towards ascribing love of youths to male animals, rarely female ones, see Craig Williams' "When a Dolphin Loves a Boy: Ancient Narratives of Erotic Love between Animals and Humans," forthcoming. A parallel for mythological beasts lusting after young heroes can perhaps be made with Sophocles' satyr play *Achilleos Erastae*,

The Rituals

Thus the Sam Wide Group has a parodic drawing style and at least one mythological parody similar to the style and subject-matter of Kabirion and Anthesteria ware. Were their cultic contexts similar as well? The only known contexts in which Sam Wide Group vases have been found are in Corinth, either in the Sanctuary of Demeter and Persephone on the north slope of the Acrocorinth or in the Potter's Quarter in the town, where pottery for use at the sanctuary was manufactured.³⁹³

The sanctuary, in use from the late 8th century BCE through the Roman period, shows its dedication to Demeter by inscriptions and thousands of characteristic terracotta votive offerings, and must be the one briefly noted by Pausanias (2.4.6).³⁹⁴ As with the Kabirion sanctuary, almost all of the votive offerings are of modest character and local production. The Corinthian sanctuary also features architectural facilities for dining, many more than at the Kabirion, with small rectangular dining rooms built from the 6th

"The Lovers of Achilles," in which the chorus of satyrs apparently played the role of the lovers. Sutton, *The Greek Satyr Play*, 36.

³⁹² On this satyr play, see Sutton, *The Greek Satyr Play*, 28-29.

³⁹³ Risser, "Corinthian Archaic and Classical Pottery," 162. The examples without provenances (now in London, Reading, Oxford, and Athens), are generally better preserved than the fragments found in excavations, and may have been from illegally excavated tombs in Corinth or elsewhere, just as is the case for Kabirion Ware.

³⁹⁴ The official publications for this sanctuary are: E. Pemberton, *The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore: The Greek Pottery. Corinth* vol. 18.1. Princeton, N.J.: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1989; K.W. Slane, *The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore: The Roman Pottery and Lamps, Corinth* vol. 18.2. Princeton, N.J.: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1990; N Bookidis and R S Stroud, *Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore: Topography & Architecture. Corinth* vol. 18.3. Princeton, N.J.: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1997; Gloria Merker, *The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore: Terracotta Figurines of the Classical, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods. Corinth* vol. 18.4. Princeton, N.J.: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2000.

century BCE until the destruction of Corinth by the Romans.³⁹⁵ These were numerous – at least 36 were in operation in 400 BCE – and must have been accompanied by temporary shelters for other diners.³⁹⁶ Votive terracottas are found in these rooms, as they are everywhere in the sanctuary, and also pottery related to dining – cups are the most frequent finds, with a variety of bowls and lekanides, and far less frequently, kraters and oinochoe.³⁹⁷ A variety of food remains point to meals that did not differ in content from the ordinary Greek menu, and which were prepared on site.³⁹⁸

The sanctuary was home to some sort of mystery practices or initiations, as it features a small rock-cut theatric area, with a “stage” of only c. 5 meters across, and with a small number of seats. This area could have easily been blocked off from view, and was used for ritual performances. Inside the area was a rock-cut pit with remains of sacrificial offerings. Several terracotta votive masks of Dionysus, along with a terracotta plaque inscribed with “Dionysus” in the genitive, were also found in this area.³⁹⁹ (fig. 4.23-4.25)

³⁹⁵ A detailed investigation of these dining facilities is that of Nancy Bookidis *et al.*, “Dining in the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Corinth,” *Hesperia*, 68.1 (1999), pp. 1-54; and an earlier article, more concerned with social contexts, by Bookidis: “Ritual Dining at Corinth,” in *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches*, ed. Nanno Marinatos and Robin Hägg. London: Routledge, 1993.

³⁹⁶ Bookidis *et al.*, “Dining in the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore,” 4.

³⁹⁷ Bookidis *et al.*, “Dining in the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore,” 14.

³⁹⁸ Bookidis *et al.*, “Dining in the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore,” 29.

³⁹⁹ Masks: Corinth, MF-73-3 and Corinth, MF 11776; see Bookidis and Fisher, “Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore on Acrocorinth: Preliminary Report V,” 290-291. Plaque: Corinth, MF 11822; see Stroud, “Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore on Acrocorinth: Preliminary Report II,” 328-330.

The excavators thus think that Dionysus was worshipped in the sanctuary alongside Demeter and Kore.

This similarities with the other vases examined in this dissertation are clear: mythological subjects, caricatural drawing style and parodic interpretation, and connection to a sanctuary in which ritual dining and drinking took place and both Demeter and Dionysus were worshipped. Yet, since only one of its vases unquestionably attains the parodic register, the Sam Wide Group will have to remain as a merely probable addition to the category of visual humor I propose in this dissertation; more examples may be discovered to confirm or deny its place.

Strategies of Humor

Having surveyed their appearances and contexts, we can now summarize the common techniques of visual humor on the Kabirion, Anthesteria, and Sam Wide images.

The grotesque body. The most obvious of these comic strategies is the use of dwarf-like, grotesque figures. The transformation of mythological figures into grotesque, distorted dwarfs is particularly effective, since gods and heroes were models of physical beauty – they thus have the farthest to fall. The nudity of many of these grotesque figures is also comically important, for it allows for a fuller view of the deformities and also exposure of genitals. Nudity, though, is not necessary, since the neatly-arranged dress of some figures, such as the central character on the Chiron vase, makes an effective contrast with their deformed bodies. That Kirke and even goddesses are caricatured shows that both sexes could be made grotesque.

Though the humor of deformed bodies and exposed genitals is common across cultures, from Roman dancing dwarfs to medieval gargoyles to modern sideshows and

adolescent films, individual variations are still possible. These images show themselves particularly eager to emphasize not only genitals but also the anus and mouth, suggesting a focus on the digestive openings of the body. The large bellies of the figures could also indicate their digestion, if they have fattened from much eating and drinking.

This comic trope of the grotesque god or hero is so effective and visually evident that scholars of these vases have often seemed to assume that it is the only comic technique of the painters. Instead, after a detailed consideration of each vase, it has become apparent that the Kabirion vases make deliberate changes to their iconographical models, and that these changes fall into patterns that demonstrate deliberate comic intention:

Improper accessories, such as the transformation of Chiron's branch into a walking-stick. The vases also feature the transformation of Troy's dignified statue of Athena and altar of Aphrodite into crude herms in the *Ilioupersis* scene, while Kadmos' Attic hydria turns into a common bucket. Kirke's loom, too, tends to turn this scene away from the fearful or magic and towards the domestic and quotidian. Similar humorous replacements operate in Greek comic literature, where a common joke is the comic reversal brought about by the replacement of a "high" with a "low" object. For instance, in the *Frogs*, Aristophanes parodies the high-flown style of Euripidean tragic monologues by having a woman mourn with tragic vocabulary the theft of her rooster:

But now my bird has flown,
flown off into the empyrean,
on its wing-tips so nimble.
It's left me woes, woes,
and in my eyes tears, tears -

they trickle, trickle down -
Oh! miserable me!⁴⁰⁰

The language of this passage closely follows the peculiarities of Euripides, who favored fancy words like “wing-tips” and also repeated emotional terms – “tears, tears” occurs in *The Trojan Women*. Though the language is close, Aristophanes replaces the proper object of a tragic lamentation – a lost relative or husband, for example – by a cock, which makes high-style language surrounding it appear contrastingly grotesque. The substitution is even more effective because the word “cock,” then as now, was a double entendre.

A disregard, on the part of characters, for their mythological narratives.

Sometimes this is accomplished by making the characters refuse to have proper relations with their enemies or allies, as when Bellerophon disregards the assistance of Pegasos, or when Helen flees towards, not away from, Menelaos. Similar, too, is the way in which the Kabirion Odysseus seems to have forgotten his mission to conquer Kirke, and seems instead to be intent upon drinking her wine, whatever its adulterations.⁴⁰¹ In other cases, a tendency to show the characters as unaware of the events unfolding around them is evident, as with the Paris who appears to be blissfully ignorant of the presence of goddesses or the Theseus who calmly surveys the oncoming rush of the sow. Related to this is a tendency to change certain details about the characters essential to the mythological narrative, as where Achilles is shown as past the age when he would have

⁴⁰⁰ The whole of this parody song runs from *Frogs* 1330-1365.

⁴⁰¹ This is especially evident on no. 402 (Mississippi, University of Mississippi P116).

needed Chiron's tutelage, or the goddesses to be judged on their beauty are shown as even more hideous than the usual grotesque figures.

Contrasts of size, as when Bellerophon is shown as far larger than either Pegasos or the Chimera, or the Sam Wide Group Sphinx is balanced precariously on an under-sized pillar.

A tendency to make scenes livelier, as where Eurystheus is shown running from the boar instead of merely hiding from it, or when the pygmies and cranes are given new stratagems.

A knowledge and exaggeration of pre-existing comic motifs. Thus, Herakles is shown leaning on his club, deliberately refusing to help his Eurystheus, while in the Attic iconography Herakles threatens Eurystheus with the boar, but does not carry the threat into execution. It was also argued that Odysseus' journey on an amphora raft showed an awareness of similar Attic comic journeys.

What is the Relation of These Images to Mythology?

That these images have humorous intent is fairly clear, and that they make reference to mythological stories is indisputable. But how do we categorize the relation of these images to their myths?

One possibility is that these are humorous images of already comic stories. Many episodes in Greek mythology are comic; indeed, comic episodes are so frequent that Friedländer suggested that the Greeks believed their gods to be pleased by such laughter (though this reasoning is somewhat circular).⁴⁰² Comic treatment of gods begins early,

⁴⁰² Paul Friedländer, "Lachende Götter," in *Studien zur antiken Literatur und Kunst*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1969, pp. 3-18.

famous examples being the episodes of the seduction of Zeus by Hera and the capture of Aphrodite and Ares by Hephaistos in the *Iliad* and the picaresque adventures of Hermes in his *Homeric Hymn*.⁴⁰³ Modern scholars often think that these instances of laughter in Homer have a diplomatic effect, as when Hephaistos resolves the quarrel of the gods by making them laugh as he impersonates Ganymede.⁴⁰⁴

Few publications concentrate on visual representations of comic myth.⁴⁰⁵

Discussion has mainly concentrating on a few striking examples, such as a scene of

⁴⁰³ For a general list of instances of laughter in Homer, including the laughter of the gods, see Joseph William Hewitt, "Homeric Laughter," *Classical Journal*, 23.6 (1928), pp. 436-447, and also his "Humor in Homer and in Virgil," *Classical Weekly*, 22 (1928-1929), pp. 169-172; 177-181; Howard W. Clarke, "The Humor of Homer," *Classical Journal*, 64.6 (1969), pp. 246-252, arguing that Homer's gods are deliberately humorous, since they display "comic incongruity," with actions far beneath their powers. 249. Burkert explains the early use of comic stories about the gods in Greece as an influence of the ancient Near East, comparing, for instance, the seduction of Zeus by Hera to the dispute between Ishtar and Gilgamesh. Burkert also links such comic myths about the gods to ritual situations, although he does not specify which these might be. Walter Burkert, "Gotterspiel und Gotterburleske in altorientalischen und griechischen Mythen," *Eranos Jahrbuch*, 51 (1982), pp. 335-367.

⁴⁰⁴ Hephaistos: Homer, *Iliad*, 1.599. W.J. Slater, "Symptotic Ethics in the Odyssey," in *Symptotica: A Symposium on the Symposium*. Ed. Oswyn Murray. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990. pp. 213-220. 218; Stephen Halliwell, "The uses of laughter in Greek culture," *CQ* 41 (1991), 279-96. 282. Branham adds the theory that the gods' comic behavior operates to show their difference from men, since they, not susceptible to mortal vulnerabilities, can carry off humorously precisely those actions most likely to cause tragedy to men – battle and adultery. R. Bracht Branham, *Unruly Eloquence: Lucian and the Comedy of Traditions*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989. 136. An exception to this line of interpretation is Brown, who holds that in the Aphrodite and Ares episode, at least, the gods simply act according to Greek shame-culture, mocking the pair in punishment for their adultery. Christopher G. Brown, "Ares, Aphrodite, and the Laughter of the Gods," *Phoenix*, 43.4 (1989), pp. 283-293. Reading this laughter as punishment might not explain why Apollo shows himself so eager to engage in the same sin.

⁴⁰⁵ ...And the recognition of the importance of such scenes is made even more difficult by the occasional denials of their existence. Schefold, for instance, wrote that the production of images which treat Herakles in a burlesque manner "is an approach richly

Herakles killing Busiris on a Caeretan hydria, where Herakles clutching and trampling on puny enemies operates as a parody of Egyptian reliefs of the triumphant Pharaoh.⁴⁰⁶

Brendel further specified that the humor of this scene comes, firstly, from the role reversal of Herakles and the king, who is shrunken into a subject, and, secondly, from the literalization of the iconography, since Herakles actually kills his victims, while the similar posture of the Pharaoh on the reliefs marked a symbolic power instead of actual slaughter.⁴⁰⁷ It is symptomatic of the discomfort modern scholars usually feel with dealing with visual humor that Hemelrijk, in his authoritative catalogue of the Caeretan hydriae, places his main discussion of the humor of this and other Caeretan vases in a section headed “Mistakes in Drawing and Humour.”⁴⁰⁸

attested outside Athens, but only outside Athens....” Karl Schefold, *Götter und Heldensagen der Griechen in der spätarchaischen Kunst*. Munich: Hirmer, 1978. 143. The existence of a burlesqued Herakles in Attic art is demonstrated in several images illustrating this essay.

406 Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, 3576. J.D. Beazley, “Kleophrades,” *JHS*, Vol. 30. (1910), pp. 38-68. 52. The analysis is repeated in J.D. Beazley and Bernard Ashmole, *Greek Sculpture and Painting*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1931. 24. The most complete surviving version of the myth of Busiris is that of Apollodorus: “After Libya, Herakles came into Egypt. That country was then ruled by Busiris, a son of Poseidon by Lysianassa, daughter of Epaphus. This Busiris used to sacrifice strangers on an altar of Zeus in accordance with a certain oracle; for once, when Egypt had suffered drought for nine years, Phrasius, a seer from Cyprus, said that the drought would cease if the Egyptians sacrificed a foreigner to Zeus every year. Busiris began by killing the seer himself and continued to sacrifice all foreigners who landed. Thus Herakles also was seized and dragged to the altar, but he burst his bonds and killed both Busiris and his son Amphidamas.” Apollodorus, *Library*, 2.5.11. The most recent discussion of the Busiris myth and images is that of M.C. Miller, “The Myth of Bousiris: Ethnicity and Art,” in *Not the Classical Ideal: Athens and the Construction of the Other in Greek Art*, Beth Cohen, ed. Leiden: Brill, 2000. pp. 413-442.

407 Otto Brendel. *Etruscan Art*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978. 173.

⁴⁰⁸ Jaap M. Hemelrijk, *Caeretan Hydriae*. Mainz am Rhein: P. von Zabern, 1984. 150.

Of these images, only those of Herakles and the Eurymanthean Boar and those of pygmies battling cranes would seem to fit into this category, of comic myths depicted in a humorous manner. Even here, as we have seen, the artists here under consideration have further exaggerated the humorous techniques of other painters of these scenes.

The rest of the images are better described as humorous treatments of serious myths – as parodies. The parody of serious mythology was a common Greek literary pursuit.⁴⁰⁹ That parody was not unknown in early Greek literature is shown by the lost mock-epic, the *Margites*, of Homer, as well as the Homeric mock-epic *Batrachomyomachia*, in which frogs and mice battle in a parody of heroic warriors (though this might have been written during at a much later date). In Attic Old Comedy, mythological parody abounds: Kratinos' *Dionysalexander*, for example. The surviving fragments of comedy and satyr plays contain many more mythological subjects and references.⁴¹⁰ Some of these parodies were textual, some visual, such as Phrynichus' staging of an old woman devoured by a whale, parodying Andromeda.⁴¹¹ Even plots

⁴⁰⁹ For a collection of texts of mythological parody, though with little commentary, see Robert Muth, *Die Gotterburleske in Der Griechischen Literatur*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1992.

⁴¹⁰ The literature on Aristophanes' intertwined parodies of myth and literature is extensive. Notable recent contributions include are Thomas K. Hubbard, *The Mask of Comedy: Aristophanes and the Intertextual Parabasis*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991; Angus M. Bowie, *Aristophanes: Myth, Ritual, and Comedy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994; Federica Casolari, *Die Mythentravestie in der Griechischen Komödie*. Munster: Aschendorff, 2003. Still fundamental are F.I. Zeitlin, "Travesties of Gender and Genre in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae*," in *Playing the Other: Gender and Society in Classical Greek Literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995; and Susanne Saïd, "Travestis et travestissements dans les comédies d'Aristophane," *CGITA*, 3 (1987), pp. 217-248.

⁴¹¹ This parody of Andromeda is mentioned in the Schol. to Aristophanes, *Nub.* 551.

which have little to do with the mythological world could include episodes of mythological parody, as when, in the *Wasps*, the hero's father attempts to escape his house by hanging on underneath a donkey, just like Odysseus.⁴¹² Such references to mythology probably have much to do with the relation of comic theater to the religious ritual.⁴¹³ Later literature also includes much mythological parody; Lucian, for example, would almost specialize in parodying the gods, although his humor would seem to be more removed from a ritual context than is that of Aristophanes.⁴¹⁴

Lelievre has addressed the issue of what the ancients thought of parody, concluding that a parody is something composed “conformably to an original but with a difference.”⁴¹⁵ This is a largely etymological definition, from *odos*, song, and *para*, a prefix which can indicate nearness and consonance, but also derivation (parallel) or transgression and opposition (paradox). Parody is not necessarily humorous, but Lelievre points out that the majority of surviving ancient parodies seem to be humorous, and thus ancient audiences probably expected parody to be humorous. Still, argues that parodic

⁴¹² Aristophanes, *Wasps*, 177-189.

⁴¹³ The instances of mythological parody in Aristophanes are collected in Carlo Pascal, *Dioniso: Saggio sulla religione e la parodia religiosa in Aristofane*. Catania: F. Battiato, 1911; see also Joseph William Hewitt, “Religious Burlesque in Aristophanes and Elsewhere,” *American Journal of Philology*, 38.2 (1917), pp. 176-185. An unsatisfactory attempt to relate what Aristophanes is doing in his *Peace* to the fertility-related clowning of Pueblo Indians is made in Andrew Horton, “Festive Comedy & Sacred Clowns: Pueblo Indian Drama and Aristophanes’ *Peace*,” *Thalia*, 1.1 (1978), pp. 27-33.

⁴¹⁴ On Lucian’s mythological parodies, see Alain Ballabriga, “Approche du burlesque divin dans l’Antiquité,” in *Le Rire des Grecs. Anthropologie du rire en Grèce ancienne*, ed. Marie-Laurence Desclos. Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 2000, pp. 123-131; and especially Branham, *Unruly Eloquence*.

⁴¹⁵ F. J. Lelievre, “The Basis of Ancient Parody,” *Greece & Rome*, 1.2 (1954), pp. 66-81. 66.

humor was not necessarily at the expense of the copied author, and that the level of this humor could vary from raucous to the merely witty.⁴¹⁶ These images operate much according to this model, for they copy much of the “normal” or serious iconography of the subject, but introduce significant changes. The main difference from Lelievre’s literary model is that, on the vases, no new characters or incidents are introduced; rather, the humor stems from modifications of the characteristics or actions of the original mythological characters.

Ancient beliefs about the connection of the laughable and the ugly mean that the presence of parodies in sanctuaries needs explanation. The Greeks thought the ugly laughable; this is particularly clear in Aristotle’s definition of the laughable as being a part of the ugly:

Comedy, as we have said, is a representation of inferior people (*phauloteroi*), not indeed in the full sense of the word bad (*kakos*), but the laughable (*geloion*) is a species of the ugly (*aischros*). It consists in some blunder (*hamartemos*) or ugliness (*aischros*) that does not cause pain or disaster, an obvious example being the comic mask which is ugly (*aischros*) and distorted (*diestrammenos*) but not painful.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁶ Lelievre, “The Basis of Ancient Parody,” 71. That parody is not necessarily humorous is also maintained in a comprehensive investigation of literary parody: Margaret A. Rose, *Parody/ Meta-fiction: An Analysis of Parody as a Critical Mirror to the Writing and Reception of Fiction*. London: Crom Helm, 1979.

⁴¹⁷ *Poetics* 5.1449a. The same link of the ugly and the laughable is posited by Plato, *Laws*, 7.816d. Similar formulations are found among the Romans: “laughter has its foundation in some kind of deformity and baseness,” (Cicero, *de Oratorio*, 2.236; cf. 2.237 and 2.239); “These and similar aberrations of the human race has ingenious Nature created as sources of amusement (*ludibria*) for herself and of wonder for us.” (Pliny, *NH* 32).

The mask is comic precisely because it is ugly.⁴¹⁸ The word *aischros* refers both to an ugly outward appearance and a shameful inner morality. The two can be linked in Greek culture, which is why Socrates (or Plato) can speak of the beauty of the Good, while Thersites is not only the most disgraceful but also the ugliest Greek soldier at Troy. Mocking poetry also tended to insult its victims interchangeably for their physical and mortal defects.⁴¹⁹ A late 3rd century BCE papyrus containing abusive sentences directed against physical peculiarities – perhaps as a companion to the game of comparisons played at *symposia*. It advises the reader to tell a redheaded man that “you do not have a face but an evening-sun.”⁴²⁰ The association between outer distortion and inward lowliness of character appears many times in ancient literature, especially that on slaves.

⁴¹⁸ Modern philosophers have been interested in this ancient link between the ugly and the laughable; Nietzsche, for example, thought that the delicacy of modern man “revolts against a truly forceful realization of the degree to which *cruelty* is part of the festive joy of the ancients and, indeed, is an ingredient of nearly every pleasure they have...” Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*. Trans. Carol Diethe. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. 45.

That the Greeks had such relatively clear standards of beauty and ugliness, as well as this definite link between the ugly and the laughable, means that we, as outside observers, can be fairly confident when identifying humorous Greek images. Outside observers cannot always attain to this confidence; see, for example, Willett’s discussions of the difficulty Europeans have in telling whether African sculptures are caricatures or not: Frank Willett, *African Art: An Introduction*. New York: Praeger, 1971. 143, 153.

⁴¹⁹ Brecht has catalogued instances of mockery of physical defects in Greek poetry: J. Brecht, *Motiv- und Typengeschichte des griechischen Spottepigramms*, Philologus, Suppl. 22.2 (1930), esp. 89-91.

⁴²⁰ P. Heidelberg 190, cf. R. Jassel, *Kleine Schriften* (1991), pp. 418-21 (= *RM* 99 (1956), pp. 242-5). Discussed in Jan Bremmer, “Jokes, Jokers and Jokebooks in Ancient Greek Culture,” in *A Cultural History of Humour: From Antiquity to the Present Day*, ed. Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997. pp. 11-28. 14.

No slave, Theognis claimed, ever stands straight – slaves’ necks are always bent, their heads always lolling forward.⁴²¹

The connection between the laughable and the morally deficient also helps explain why Greek shame-culture so often operated through the making of jokes. The policing jokes of Sparta have been investigated by David, who concludes that the Spartan state used laughter to consolidate social norms.⁴²² Spartan boys engaged in jesting contests, and the surviving examples of their wit are aggressively focused on dominating their opponents.⁴²³ Spartan women and old men publicly mocked those who had failed in battle or deviated from social rules.⁴²⁴ This mocking enforced the behaviors – self-control, aggressiveness in battle – inculcated and maintained by the other types of laughter.

The Greek connection of the grotesque with the laughable is also evident in their opinions about apes. Apes were thought of as ludicrous parodies of the human form – they were “laughable by nature” – and Galen declares that the painter or sculptor could most perfectly parody a human hand by substituting the hand of an ape.⁴²⁵ Thus it is the

⁴²¹ Theognis 1.535-8. See the discussion of ideas of slaves in Benjamin Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004.

⁴²² Ephraim David, “Laughter in Spartan Society” in *Classical Sparta: Techniques Behind her Success*, ed. Anton Powell. London: Routledge, 1989. pp. 1-25.

⁴²³ David, “Laughter in Spartan Society,” 4, citing Plutarch, *Lyc.* 17.1 and 25.3 and *Moralia*, 224B, 232C, 210E, 229C; Plato, *Protagoras*, 342 D-E.

⁴²⁴ David, “Laughter in Spartan Society,” 5, citing Plutarch, *Lyc.* 14.6 and 25.3.

⁴²⁵ Galen, *de usu partium*, 1.22. Ape as “laughable by nature”: Athenaeus, 14.613d. For more opinions about the comic nature of the ape, see Plutarch, *Moralia* 64E, 97D; Galen, *de usu partium*, 3.8, 3.16, 13.2, 13.11, 15.8; Galen, *de anatom. adm.*, 4.1. Athenaeus

mere difference, the change within the similarities, that render both the ape and the caricature humorous. On some vases, the two combine, as when revelers are caricatured as apes on a cup in Rome.⁴²⁶

But what is the intersection of religion with all these types of visual humor?

mentions apes as performing alongside, and being thought funnier than, human jesters: 14.613d. For a discussion, see William Coffman McDermott, *The Ape in Antiquity*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1938.

⁴²⁶ Rome, Mus. Naz. Etrusco di Villa Giulia, 64224.

Something wonderful happened to me: I was caught up to the seventh Heaven. There sat all the gods in assembly. By special grace I was granted the privilege of making a wish. 'Wilt thou,' said Mercury, 'wilt thou have youth or beauty or power or long life or the most beautiful maiden or any of the other glories we have in this chest? Choose, but only one thing.' For a moment I was at a loss. Then I addressed myself to the gods as follows: 'Most honorable contemporaries, I choose this one thing – that I may always have the laugh on my side.'⁴²⁷

Aischrologia

What is the purpose of laughing at gods while worshipping them? When scholars discuss the religious use of Greek vases, the underlying assumption is that this imagery honors gods and heroes by reproducing “serious” images of them. Thus, for instance, Athena is honored by the commemoration of her patronage of the Panathenaic festival and of the city of Athens itself by the repetition of her image on Panathenaic amphorae. What is needed for the parody vases is an equal understanding of how their imagery functioned within their ritual settings and within Greek culture as a whole, where humor of a certain sort was used as a way to worship and honor the gods.⁴²⁸

⁴²⁷ Kierkegaard, *Either-Or*.

⁴²⁸ There are several valuable scholarly models for the attempt to understand the place of images within specific cultural settings: see, for instance, David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989. For a criticism of studying a history of, specifically, humor without considering the specific social situations in which the joking took place, see Elfriede Moser-Rath, “Some Thoughts on Historical Narrative Research (On the Occasion of Kurt Ranke’s Sixty-Fifth Birthday),” in *German Volkskunde: A Decade of Theoretical Confrontation, Debate and Reorientation (1967-1977)*, ed. and trans. James R. Dow and Hannjost Lixfeld. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986. pp. 212-28. 214-15; and

Rituals of spoken and acted mockery were indeed a part of Greek religion – a phenomenon sometimes referred to in antiquity and given by modern scholars the summary label *aischrologia* (“dirty” or “shameful” talk). The Greeks practiced *aischrologia* during certain festivals, mainly in honor of Dionysos and Demeter. In this chapter, the evidence for *aischrologia* is collected, discussed, and compared to other examples of ritual mockery from other cultures. Using both classicists’ attempts to explain ancient ritual mockery and anthropologists’ theories of ritual mockery in other societies, I will argue for a new understanding of *aischrologia*. Then, I will propose possible ways in which the vase images could have functioned within a context of this type of ritual humor.

Though it is set in Egypt, Herodotus’ description of the festivities at Bubastis serves as a good introduction to the concept of *aischrologia*, since it is relatively detailed and early, unlike many of the sources, which are from later scholiasts and lexicographers.⁴²⁹ Herodotus was probably interested in this Egyptian festival precisely because of its similarity to certain Greek rituals:

also her ‘*Lustige Gesellschaft*’: *Schwank und Witz des 17 und 18 Jahrhunderts in kultur- und socialgeschichtlichen Kontext*. Stuttgart: Metzler, 1984. For an example of a fitting of the comedy of a visual artist into a cultural context of humorous theater, literature, and theory, see Mariët Westermann, *The Amusements of Jan Steen: Comic Painting in the Seventeenth Century*. Zwolle: Waanders Pub., 1997. There have also been recent exhibitions aimed at clarifying the comic art of a period or nation: one notable example was “Comic Grotesque: Wit and Mockery in German Art, 1870-1940,” at the Neue Galerie, New York; the catalogue is Pamela Kort, ed., *Comic Grotesque: Wit and Mockery in German Art, 1870-1940*. Munich and London: Prestel, 2004.

⁴²⁹ A complete listing of the sources is given by Hans Fluck, *Skurrile Riten in griechischen Kulte*. Diss., Freiburg, 1931; and also in Stephen Halliwell, “Le Rire Rituel et la Nature de l’Ancienne Comédie Attique,” in *Le rire des Grecs: anthropologie du rire en Grèce ancienne*. Ed. Marie-Laurence Desclos. Grenoble: Millon, 2000. pp. 155-168.

When the people are on their way to Bubastis, they go by river, a great number in every boat, men and women together. Some of the women make a noise with rattles, others play flutes all the way, while the rest of the women, and the men, sing and clap their hands. As they travel by river to Bubastis, whenever they come near any other town they bring their boat near the bank; then some of the women do as I have said, while some shout mockery (*tothadousi*) of the women of the town; others dance, and others stand up and lift their skirts. They do this whenever they come alongside any riverside town. But when they have reached Bubastis, they make a festival with great sacrifices, and more wine is drunk at this feast than in the whole year besides. It is customary for men and women (but not children) to assemble there to the number of seven hundred thousand, as the people of the place say.⁴³⁰

This and other sources describe people mocking others during this and other festivals, but there are differences in the identity of these mockers and their targets. The mockers can be the whole group of celebrants, a certain sub-group, or even a single person. The celebrants can mock each other, men could mock women and vice versa, or only well-known celebrants could be the object of mockery. Most frustrating is the sources' lack of specificity as to the actual contents of spoken *aischrologia*. The only thing that we can be fairly certain of is that *aischrologia* had a large component of crude, probably sexual

Translations of some of the texts are difficult to find, and so they are collected in Appendix 3.

The phenomenon to be discussed in this chapter is usually referred to as *aischrologia*, although different sources use different words to describe similar actions: *loidoria*, *paignia*, *skoptein*, *aposkoptein*, *tothazein*, *hubridzein*, *komodein*. Every verb of mockery used in a ritual context is also used in a secular one. For example, *tothazeiv* is often used to describe ritual mockery, but is equally often used to describe people jeering at one another in a non-ritual context; for example, in Plato, *Republic* 474a, where the verb describes the behavior of people who will jeer at the philosopher. There seems to be no strict division of terms indicating ritual mockery from those describing everyday obscenity or insult, both of which are interchangeably indicated by a variety of words. This interchangeability is especially interesting, since there was a word available to describe speaking profanely of sacred things: *blasphemein*, modern “blasphemy.” Ritual mockery was something else.

⁴³⁰ Herodotus, 2.60.1-3.

humor, as we know from the occasions when the sexes mock each other or when the handling of models of the genitals is also part of the festival, as well as from the adjectives used in descriptions of these rituals.

The most attested forms of *aischrologia* are the *gephurismos* and the mockery “from the wagons” (*ta ek ton hamazon skommaton*). Many classical authors referred to them in passing, and later commentators described the rituals for the benefit of later readers.

The ritual called the *gephurismos* (the “bridging”) took place during the procession to Eleusis during the festival in celebration of the Mysteries.⁴³¹ The processioners crossing the bridge would be mocked by someone or some group of people. The mockers seem to have made humorous comments about the processioners, perhaps about their current role as Eleusinian initiates and perhaps directed towards other, more secular areas of life.⁴³²

⁴³¹ The sources on the *gephurismos* are, as given by Fluck, *Skurrile Riten*: Suda, s.v. *gephuristai*; Suda, s.v. *gephuris*; Strabo, *Geography* IX.1.24; Ammonius, *peri diaphoron lezeon* (p. 128 Valck); Aristophanes, *Frogs*, 371ff; Schol. Ar. *Plut.* 1015. For a summary of the pre-20th century bibliography on this ritual, see E. de Martino, “I Gephyrismi,” *Studi e materiali di storia delle religioni*, 16 (1934), pp. 64-79.

⁴³² That later commentators had an unclear an idea of the specific details of these happenings is shown by the confusions and contradictions they run into as soon as they attempt to more fully explain the ritual; for instance, one entry in the *Suda* on the *gephurismos* claims that it was a group of men who mocked passerbys at the bridge (Suda, s.v. *gephuristai*), while another argues instead that it was a single, veiled man (Suda, s.v. *gephuris*). This last entry purports to refute the statement of Herakleus, a second century BCE author, that the mocker was in fact a female prostitute, and thus it seems that its proposal of a single man veiled like a woman might be less a recording of newly discovered facts and more of a compromise position between Herakleus and those who held that the mockers were a group of men. Thus, this entry probably cannot be trusted either for the information it contains that the mocker made jokes about prominent citizens, calling them by name, since it is the only source for this idea. de Martino draws from the contradictions of the *gephurismos* texts the conclusion that the form of the ritual

More is known about the mockery “from the wagons,” which has already been mentioned in connection with the Anthesteria festival.⁴³³ The sources agree that this was a feature of certain Athenian festivals,⁴³⁴ though some leave the festival unnamed, others generically say that it took place during festivals for Dionysos, and others name the Anthesteria.⁴³⁵ They agree that some celebrants would ride on wagons, mocking passersby. Classical authors used the phrase “from the wagons” as a metaphorical

described by these later sources is a late, declining phase of what had begun as a larger obscene ritual, but there is no real reason to believe this. Martino, “I Gephyrismi.” Modern scholars, when describing the *gephurismos*, tend to choose whatever combination of personages and jokes accord best with their own ideas. de Martino, for example, followed Herakleus because he thought that the mocker, if female, would be playing the mythological part of Iambe or Baubo (despite the difficulties of playing this part without Demeter): Martino, “I Gephyrismi.”

⁴³³ The sources on mockery “from the wagons” are, as given by Fluck, *Skurrile Riten*: Schol. Luc. *Jup. Trag.* 44; Schol. Luc. *Eun.* 2; Harpokration s.v. *pompeias kai pompeuein*; Bavaricus, s.v. *kai loidorein*; Plato, *Laws* 1.637a; *Corpus Paroem. Graec.*, ed. Leutsch and Schneidewin, Gottingen 1851. Appendix IV, 80; Photius, s.v. *ta ek ton hamazon*; *Anecdota Bekkeri* 1.316; Schol. Demosthenes *coron.* 11; Diony. Halicarn. *A.R.* VII 27 p. 491; Schol. Ar. *Equit.* 547; Schol. Ar. *Nub.* 297; John. Laur. Philad. Lydus, *de mensibus* IV.56. A full list of citations is also given by Walter Burkert, *Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth*. Trans. Peter Bing. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983. 229 n. 18.

⁴³⁴ Except for Suda, s.v. *ta ek ton hamazon*, which places it in Alexandria.

⁴³⁵ Unnamed festival: John. Laur. Philad. Lydus, *de mensibus* IV.56; Schol. Ar. *Nub.* 297; Diony. Halicarn. *A.R.* VII 27 p. 491. Festival for Dionysos: Plato, *Laws*, 637a; *Corpus Paroem. Graec.*, ed. Leutsch and Schneidewin, Gottingen 1851. Appendix IV, 80; Harpokration, s.v. *pompeias kai pompeuein*; Schol. Luc. *Eun.* 2. Anthesteria: Phot. s.v. *ta ek ton hamazon*. Some later commentators seem to have gotten rather confused about the reference; for instance, the scholiast on Aristophanes’ *Plutus*, 1015 claims that “from the wagons” refers to groups of women riding on wagons on the way to Eleusis who would mock at each other. Since all the other sources use male pronouns (which could mean either just men or mixed groups of men and women) and describe the event as taking place in Athens, it seems that this scholiast has confused the mockery “from the wagons” with that of women’s festivals or the *gephurismos*.

reference in their writings, and by looking at the context of these references, it is possible to see that this mockery was personal and rather outrageously insulting.⁴³⁶

More valuable in terms of specific information are some descriptions in archaic, classical, and Hellenistic authors of what they considered to be unusual festivals outside of Attica. Some of these festivals featured *aischrologia*, but it should not be concluded that this was the feature that made the festivals worthy of description, since these authors and their contemporaries make many casual mentions of Athenian *aischrologia*.⁴³⁷

In addition to his description of Bubastis, Herodotus records a celebration of the Aeginetans to honor the cult statues of Damia and Auxesia. The Aeginetans had stolen these statues from the Epidaurians and, according to Herodotus, copied the rites of the Epidaurians by setting up female choruses with male chorus-leaders; these choruses mocked the other women of the country.⁴³⁸ Similarly, Pausanias described a sanctuary of Mysian Demeter, during whose festivals men and women laughed and jeered at one another (*chrontai kai skommasin*).⁴³⁹

⁴³⁶ Thus, for example, in Lucian's *Jup. Trag.* 44, Zeus describes someone who is arguing that the gods do not exist as "speaking from the wagons," a very nice joke (since those who actually joked from the wagons did so in celebration of the gods) that later spurred at least two scholiasts to explain Lucian's reference. Hugo Rabe, *Scholia in Lucianum*. Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1906. For another use of "from the wagons" as a metaphor for insulting speech in everyday life, see Schol. on Demosthenes *Coron.* 11.

⁴³⁷ Only in the case of the festival at Bubastis might it be argued that Herodotus looks askance at the *aischrologia*, but this is probably only because of what he considers its extreme nature, publicity, and physical component, not the fact in itself.

⁴³⁸ Herodotus, 5.83. The goddesses seem to have served the same function, if they were not actually identical to, Demeter and Persephone.

⁴³⁹ Pausanias, 7.27.9-10

The most attested of these non-Attic festivals is that of a sacrifice to Apollo on the island of Anaphe.⁴⁴⁰ The sources all describe a custom in which the men and women of the island to jeer at each other during this festival in commemoration of the sacrifice to Apollo performed on Anaphe by the Argonauts. Shipwrecked, the Argonauts had nothing better to offer than libations of water poured out over burning wood, and were thus laughed at by Medea and her handmaidens, who were used to more sumptuous sacrifices.

Another interesting although probably biased source is Lactantius, who tells how at Lindos, Herakles once took and ate the oxen of a plowman who had refused to sell it to him. Bereft, the plowman cursed Herakles.⁴⁴¹ Herakles, highly amused by the plowman's creative invective, later appointed him priest of his cult so that he and his followers would make these curses part of their ritual.⁴⁴² Lactantius, one of the early fathers of the Church, discusses this episode as part of a chapter on the unacceptable things non-Christians do in their cults, beginning his survey with human sacrifice and ending with merely ridiculous rituals like these, and since he is the only source for this ritual, it is impossible to know how far he is distorting or embellishing the story. Still, it is possible that the people of Lindos may have performed a ritual with *aischrologia* in honor of Herakles, with a corresponding aetiology, and in any case the story demonstrates that the

⁴⁴⁰ Sources: Apollodorus, 1.9.26; Apollonius Rh., 4.1719-30; Konon, 49.

⁴⁴¹ Lactantius, *div. inst.* 1.21, 31-36.

⁴⁴² On cursing at Lindos, see also Callimachus, frg. 22/3. This festival is discussed in Martin P. Nilsson, *Griechische Feste von religiöser Bedeutung, mit Ausschluss der attischen*. Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1906. 450 ff; and Walter Burkert, "Buzyge und Palladion: Gewalt und Gericht im altgriechischen Ritual," *ZRGG*, 22 (1970), pp. 356-368. 364ff. Burkert connects the rite to others like the Athenian *Bouphronia* which addressed Greek concerns about whether or not men were justified in "murdering" animals.

learned Lactantius did not consider a non-Demeterian festival with *aischrologia* implausible.

Modern scholars have tended to be much more interested in *aischrologia* when it is described in the sources as being part of women's festivals. *Aischrologia* featured in at least two, and probably three, Athenian women's rituals: the Thesmophoria, Skira, and Haloa. The most famous of these, although little more actual information about it survives than the others, is the Thesmophoria.⁴⁴³ This three day festival in celebration of Demeter was celebrated by Athenian women who fasted and mourned in imitation of the goddess' grief over the loss of her daughter Persephone, and afterwards performed ritual mockery, apparently in imitation of another episode in the story of Demeter and Persephone:

⁴⁴³ The most important early work on the Thesmophoria is that of Deubner and Nilsson: Deubner, *Attische Feste*, 40-60; Nilsson, *Griechische Feste*, 313-325. The modern influential discussions are those of Zeitlin, Winkler, and Versnel: Froma I. Zeitlin, "Cultic Models of the Female: Rites of Dionysus and Demeter," *Arethusa*, 15.1/2 (1982), pp. 129-159; J.J. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece*. New York and London: Routledge, 1990. 188-209; H.S. Versnel, "The Festival for Bona Dea and the Thesmophoria," *Greece and Rome*, 39.1 (1992), pp. 31-55. A study dedicated specifically to the role of *aischrologia* in women's festivals is that of Allaire Brumfeld, "Aporreta: Verbal and Ritual Obscenity in the Cults of Ancient Women," in *The Role of Religion in the Early Greek Polis: Proceedings of the Third International Seminar on Ancient Greek Cult, organized by the Swedish Institute at Athens, 16-18 October 1992*, ed. Robin Hägg. Stockholm: Paul Aströms Förlag, 1996. pp. 67-74. The most recent writings on women and *aischrologia* are those of McClure and O'Higgins: Laura McClure, *Spoken Like a Woman: Speech and Gender in Athenian Drama*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999. 47-52; Laurie O'Higgins, *Women and Humor in Classical Greece*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. 15-36. Lowe has written a detailed analysis of the problems of understanding the texts related to the Thesmophoria and Haloa: N.J. Lowe, "Thesmophoria and Haloa: Myth, Physics and Mysteries," in *The Sacred and the Feminine in Ancient Greece*, ed. Sue Blundell and Margaret Williamson. London and New York: Routledge, 1998. pp. 149-173.

And first [Demeter] sat down on the rock which has been named Laughless after her...thereupon she made her way to Celeus, who at that time reigned over the Eleusinians. Some women were in the house, and when they bade her sit down beside them, a certain old crone, Iambe, joked (*skophasa*) the goddess and made her smile. For that reason they say that the women break jests (*skoptein*) at the Thesmophoria.⁴⁴⁴

The joking Iambe is first mentioned in the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* (202-4), but we do not know either what jokes she was supposed to have made nor what Athenian women said to imitate her.⁴⁴⁵ A much later tradition, most fully recorded by the Church Fathers, has Demeter laugh at an old women named Baubo, whose humorous turn is to lift up her skirt and display her genitals.⁴⁴⁶ This gesture is satirically described by Clement of Alexandria:

⁴⁴⁴ Apollodorus 1.5.1.

⁴⁴⁵ On the connection of the rituals at Eleusis with the Iambe episode, see N.J. Richardson, ed., *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974. 214-16.

⁴⁴⁶ Iambe is the name of the woman cheering up Demeter in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*; a *Hymn to Demeter* by the Hellenistic poet Philikos (see *Supplementum Hellenisticum*, ed. Lloyd-Jones and P. Parsons, Berlin, 1983, no. 680); in the poetry of Nikander (*FGrHist* 328, fr. 103; also, scholiast on Nicander, *Alexipharmaka* 130); Apollodorus, 1.5.1; *Etymologicum Magnum*, s.v. Iambe; and Philokhoros (*FGrHist* 328, fr. 103). This woman is called Baubo by Clement of Alexandria, *Protreptikos* 2.20.1-21.2; Eusebios, *Praeparatio evangelica* 2.3.31-35; Arnobius, *Adversus Nationes* 5.25-26 (text in Marchesi, *Corpus scriptorum latinorum Paravianum*, Rome, 1953, p. 281); Asklepiades of Tragilos, preserved in Harpokration (*FGrHist* 12, fr. 4); Palaiphatos, preserved in Harpokration (*FGrHist*, 44, fr. 1). Baubo is also mentioned in at least two inscriptions: one from Naxos, 4th c. BCE, recording a dedication made to Demeter, Kore, Zeus Eubouleus, and Baubo (*SEG* 16 (1959), no. 478 (p. 138)); the other from Paros, 1st c. BCE, dedication to Hera, Demeter Thesmophoria, Kore, Zeus Eubouleus, and Baubo (*IG* 12.5.227). The above list is taken from Maurice Olender, "Aspects of Baubo: Ancient Texts and Contexts," in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*, ed. David M. Halperin, John J. Winkler, and Froma I. Zeitlin. Trans. Robert Lamberton. Princeton, N.J. Princeton University Press, 1990. pp. 83-113. 84-85. Baubo has attracted much attention, most of it focused on her sexual nature (i.e., George Devereux's *Baubô: La Vulve Mythique*. Paris: J.-C. Godefroy, 1983.); thus, the work is not immediately pertinent to a study of *aischrologia*. A good survey of the sources for and bibliography on Baubo is that of Olender, "Aspects of Baubo," translated

Baubo, after greeting [Demeter], offers her the *kykeon*, but she refuses it and will not drink on account of her mourning; Baubo is upset and feels that she had been treated with contempt, so that she uncovers her parts and shows them to the goddess. At the sight of this, [Demeter] is delighted and finally accepts the drink (though not without anguish), enchanted as she was by the spectacle.⁴⁴⁷

The strongly sexual nature of Baubo's gesture suggests that Iambe, too, made Demeter laugh by some sort of shameful talk.⁴⁴⁸ Iambe's probably lewdness is confirmed by the tendency towards shameful humor in the genre of poetry, the iambic, connected with Iambe.⁴⁴⁹

from Olender's "Aspects de Baubô: Textes et contextes antiques," *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 202.1 (1985), pp. 3-55. See also Graf's discussions of Baubo: Fritz Graf, *Eleusis und die orphische Dichtung Athens in vorhellenistischer Zeit*. Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1974. 166-171. The terracotta figurines of women with enlarged or prominently genitals are often identified as Baubo; these may illustrate her gesture and its importance in the worship of Demeter in at least some of her cult centers. For examples, see Theodor Wiegand und Hans Schrader, *Priene: Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen und Untersuchungen in den Jahren 1895-1898*. Berlin: G. Reimer, 1904. 161-63. Also on this Hymn, see Ann Suter, *The Narcissus and the Pomegranate. An Archaeology of the Homeric Hymn to Demeter*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002.

⁴⁴⁷ Clement of Alexandria, *Protreptikos* 2.20.1-21.2. Similarly, Arnobius, *Adversus Nationes* 5.25-26 reads: "She takes that part of the body by which the female sex gives birth and on account of which woman is called 'the bearer' and, after long neglect makes it as neat and smooth as a little boy whose skin is not yet tough and hairy. She comes back to the grieving goddess. Then, in the midst of the other things that are customarily done to assuage grief and bring it to an end, she exposes herself, and showing her organs lays bare all the parts veiled by shame. The goddess' gaze falls on the pubis and feasts on the sight of this extraordinary sort of consolation." Demeter laughs and drinks; thus "the obscenity of a lewd act was able to attain what Baubo's modest behavior had long failed to accomplish." Marcovich has clarified the dependence of Arnobius' account on that of Clement: Miroslav Marcovich, "Demeter, Baubo, Iacchus – And a Redactor" in *Studies in Graeco-Roman Religions and Gnosticism*. Leiden and New York: Brill, 1988. pp. 20-27.

⁴⁴⁸ Philokhoros (*FGrHist* 328, fr. 103) had Iambe both speak "silly things" (*akhrestologousa*) and make "some trivial gestures" (*skhemata akhresta poiouosa*).

⁴⁴⁹ There are many discussions of the connections between Iambe and iambic, who are linked by the *Etymologicum Magnum*, s.v. Iambe; see, for example, M. L. West, *Studies*

The Stenia was another women's festival in celebration of Demeter, and since it took place on the two days prior to the Thesmophoria, it was rather overshadowed by it during the classical period, and only late lexicographers associate with it the same abuse as in the more popular festival.⁴⁵⁰

The festival called the Haloa was in honor of Demeter and Dionysos.⁴⁵¹ It is described only in a scholiast on Lucian.⁴⁵² The scholiast wrote about a secret ritual for

in *Greek Elegy and Iambus*. Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1974. 22-39. For the relation of iambic and Old Comedy, see Ralph M. Rosen, *Old Comedy and the Iambographic Tradition*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988.

As well, the sources on the Thesmophoria that describe the language of its *aischrologia* do assume that this language was of a sexual nature. For example, Kleomedes, in criticizing Epicurus' language writes that "some of his expressions one would say came from brothels, others are like the things said at Demetrian festivals by women celebrating the Thesmophoria" (*de motu circul.*, *Corp. Cael.* 2.1). However, the value of these sources is questionable, since they are not only late but also were written by males, who were supposedly barred from the Thesmophoria. Some scholars have thought that clues to the type of mockery offered by these women can be gotten from the insults offered to womankind by Euripides' relative in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoria*, but again there is the difficulty of access to the actual festival.

⁴⁵⁰ On the Stenia, see H.W. Parke, *Festivals of the Athenians*. Ithaca (NY): Cornell University Press, 1977. 88.

⁴⁵¹ The most important recent discussions of the Haloa are those of Winkler, *Constraints of Desire*; and Lowe, "Thesmophoria and Haloa."

⁴⁵² The scholion is as follows (trans Lowe, 167-8): "Haloe: A festival at Athens of Demeter and Kore and of Dionysus, encompassing mysteries, held among the Athenians at the cutting of the vine and the tasting of the wine previously laid in storage. In these [subject missing] in the form of male privates are set out, which they explain as symbolic of the seed of men's generation, because Dionysus in making the gift of wine provided that stimulating drug as an incitement to sex. He gave it to Icarius, whom the shepherds having also [?] slain through their ignorance of the effects of wine-drinking, and subsequently being driven mad on account first of their blasphemous impulse towards Dionysus, and secondly having remained under the very aspect of shame [?] - an oracle commanded them to desist from their madness by fashioning clay genitals and dedicating them. This done, they were released from the curse, and the present festival commemorated the events. In it, there is also presented a women's *telete* at Eleusis, and many jokes and frivolities are uttered. The women go in alone, and may say what they

women at Eleusis, during which the priests prepared a feast and left it to the female worshippers, who carried models of genitals, male and female, and also ate cakes in these shapes as well, while using shameful language, the priestesses circulating through the crowd to whispering in their ears that they should take lovers.⁴⁵³ Not surprisingly, mentions of the Haloa from fourth c. BCE on tend to describe it as a festival for courtesans.⁴⁵⁴ Though the scholiast is late and his information unprecedented, these early corroborations make him more reliable than most late sources.

The scholiast attempts to explain these Haloa rituals by recording that the festival celebrates the deliverance of some shepherds from some unnamed problem through the dedication of terracotta models of genitals at a shrine of Dionysos, whom they had attacked, thinking that he had poisoned them with wine, which they had never before

wish; and indeed they do then say the most disgusting things to one another, and the priestesses approach the women secretly and into their ear urge them to commit adultery, as though it were some holy secret. All the women shout disgusting, blasphemous things at one another, handling the while indecent images of the body, male and female alike. Here there is a great deal of wine laid ready, and tables laden with all the victuals of earth and sea save those forbidden in the mysteries.... The Archons prepare the tables and leave them inside for the women, while they themselves depart and wait outside to show all visiting foreigners that civilizes foods originated with them and were communicated to all mankind by the,. Also laid on the table are private parts of both sexes fashioned of cake. It is called Haloa after the fruit of Dionysus, for *aloai* are where vines are grown.”

⁴⁵³ According to a late source, the women worshipped a model of the female genitals during the Thesmophoria: Theodoetos of Kyrrhos, *Graecarum affectionum Curatio* 3.84. Burkert connects this worship and the Haloa models and cakes to a mention of Sicilian cakes shaped like female pudenda in Athenaeus 14.647a, which purports to quote Herakleides of Syracuse. Burkert then parallels all these female models to the phalloi modeled in dough thrown into pits with the piglets – see Schol. Luc. P. 275.23-276.28 (Rabe). Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 244.

⁴⁵⁴ For example, Demosthenes, 59.116.

tasted. Thus, again, there stands a humorous aetiology behind a festival featuring *aischrologia*.

Another type of source on *aischrologia* that has not received much attention in modern scholarship is that which mentions ritual mockery without specifying the festival during which it was performed. Sometimes this is because this source is more or less fragmentary,⁴⁵⁵ but others are complete, and are thus of interest in that they seem to indicate that the use of ritual mockery was widespread enough to form a general category of behavior. Most notably, Aristotle, when he is discussing banning from the city all shameful things, includes “sculpture or painting that represents indecent actions, except in the temples of a certain class of gods to whom the law allows even scurrility (*ei ma para tisi theois toioutois ois kai ton tothasmon*).”⁴⁵⁶ Plutarch, too, when writing about certain religious practices which he disapproves, includes in the list “the eating of raw flesh, rending of victims, fasting, and beating of breasts, and again in many places scurrilous language at the shrines (*pollochou de palin aischrologia pros hieros*)....”⁴⁵⁷ This “many places” indicates an wide use of *aischrologia*.⁴⁵⁸ Plutarch continues this passage by giving his opinion that “these acts are not performed for any god, but are

⁴⁵⁵ For example, Anecdota Bekkeri 1.316, which must have originally specified the festival.

⁴⁵⁶ Aristotle, *Politics* 1336b 14-17. Similarly, see also Bavaricus, s.v. *kai loidorein*, an entry discussing unnamed but plural “festivals of raillery (*loidorias*).”

⁴⁵⁷ Plutarch, *def. orac.* 14 = *Moralia*, 417c.

⁴⁵⁸ Especially since Plutarch indicates that the behavior which he objects to takes place “at the shrines,” which would mean that he is not referring to the rituals of the *gephurismos*, abuse “from the wagons,” or mocking during the Thesmophoria, since none of these took place at shrines.

soothing and appeasing rites for the averting of evil spirits.” This is the statement that led Fluck to conclude that all ritual *aischrologia* had an apotropaic purpose, but this is an overly simplistic interpretation which was soon rejected by the majority of scholars.⁴⁵⁹ We should not accept Plutarch’s interpretation of a religious ritual of which he disapproves and thus would like to separate from the worship of the important deities.

Another category of possible *aischrologia*-like happenings during religious ritual is dancing. For example, there are some late descriptions of the *baryllika*, apparently a comic, shameful dance performed, possible in honor of Artemis, by men in female masks.⁴⁶⁰ The scanty evidence for these dances means that our understanding of their role will never be complete. These dances are thus a reminder of the many types of ritual behavior which are not captured in our sources.

⁴⁵⁹ Disputed first by Deubner, *Attische Feste*, 267. Plutarch’s account is similar to that of Iamblichus, the 3rd c. CE Neoplatonist, who also attempts give a new perspective to the use of *aischrologia*. Responding to arguments of Porphyry that “obscene utterances” are not fit for a spiritual interpretation of the mysteries, he writes that “my view is that they have the role of expressing the absence of beauty which is characteristic of matter and the previous ugliness of those things that are going to be brought to order.... So then, once again, one is prompted to seek after the causes of form and beauty when one learns the nature of obscenity from the utterance of obscenities; one rejects the practice of obscenities (*aischron*), while by means of uttering them one makes clear one’s knowledge of them, and thus turns one’s impulses in the opposite direction.” Iamblichus, *de mysteriis* 1.11, trans. Emma C. Clarke, John M. Dillon, and Jackson P. Hershbell. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004. Unfortunately, his description is not very specific, and can add little to our understanding of the workings of *aischrologia*; in particular, his explanation for the use of obscenity can hardly extend to the whole history of *aischrologia*, if, indeed, to any part of it at all.

⁴⁶⁰ See Hesch., s.v. *brudalixa* and s.v. *brullixistai*; Pollux, 4.104; G. Dickens, “Terracotta Masks,” in *The Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia at Sparta*, R.M. Dawkins, ed. London: Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies, 1929. pp. 163-186; Henri Jeanmaire, *Couroi et Courètes: Essai sur l’éducation spartite et sur les rites d’adolescence dans l’antiquité hellénique*. Lille: Bibliothèque Universitaire, 1939. 520-2; Lillian B. Lawler, *The Dance in Ancient Greece*. London: A. & C. Black, 1965. 112.

We will also leave out of the survey the rituals connected to myths in which deities laugh, such as the Boeotian festival of the Daidala, with its myth about Hera laughing when she finds that the “bride” she thought Zeus was marrying was in fact a log in disguise.⁴⁶¹ It is too difficult to ascertain the relationship between mythological laughter and ritual practice except where the sources make clear that the one is based upon the other, as with the Thesmophoria joking.⁴⁶²

One last possible source of information about *aischrologia* is Aristophanes, since scholars have sometimes thought that he refers to or parodies certain rites of *aischrologia*. For example, the chorus of Eleusinian initiates encountered by Dionysos in the underworld during the *Frogs* might be reenacting some form of ritual *aischrologia*,

⁴⁶¹ On this festival, see Plutarch, *FrGrHist* 388 F I; Pausanias, 9.2.7-9.3.3; and A. Chaniotis, “Ritual Dynamics: The Boiotian Festival of the Daidala,” in *Kykeon: Studies in Honour of H.S. Versnel*, ed. H. F. J. Horstmanshoff et al. Leiden: Brill, 2002. pp. 23-48.

⁴⁶² Another area of exploration which must be left out here is the topic of ritual humor in Roman religion. Some examples of this are catalogues by Jean-Pierre Cèbe, *La Caricature et la parodie dans le monde romain antique*. Paris: E. de Boccard, 1966, esp. 19-35 and 231ff. A general exploration of Roman humor can be found in Amy Richlin *Garden of Priapus: Sexuality and Aggression in Roman Humor*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. A specific example of Roman ritual laughter is that of the festival for Bona Dea, during which women jested and even drank wine. See H.H.J. Brouwer, *Bona Dea: The Sources and a Description of the Cult*. Leiden and New York: E.J. Brill, 1989; and Versnel, “Festival for Bona Dea and the Thesmophoria.” Another is the Nonae Capratinae, a festival during which Roman slave-girls dressed like their mistresses, engaged in mock-battles, and mocked men. The most comprehensive study of this festival is that of J.N. Bremmer, “Myth and Ritual in Ancient Rome: the Nonae Capratinae,” in *Roman Myth and Mythography*, ed. J.N. Bremmer and N.M. Horsfall. London: University of London, 1987. 76-88. The ancient sources for the Nonae Capratinae are: Plutarch, *Cam.* 29 and 33, *Rom.* 29, *Mor.* 313; Varro, *LL* 6.18; Ovid *AA* 2.257f; Polyaeus 8.30; Aus. *Fer.* 24.16; Macr. *Sat.* 11.11.35-40; Silvius (*CIL* I.1), p. 269. There was also the festival of Anna Perenna, especially as described by Ovid (*Fasti* 3.675-697), as well as the genre of *fescennini* verses - ribald and mocking verses used at weddings (Catullus 61.119-49) triumphs (Pliny, *NH* 28.39) harvest festivals (Horace, *Epistles* 2.1.145-6) satire of emperors against enemies (Macrobius, *Saturnalis* 2.4.21).

perhaps that of the *gephurismos*, since they make fun of various prominent Athenians by name.⁴⁶³ Also, scholars have proposed that the scene in the *Wasps* during which Philocleon positions a prostitute holding torches in what seems to be a parody of an Eleusinian ritual in order to better insult his son might also be connected to the *gephurismos*.⁴⁶⁴ Unfortunately, information on the festive models is too scanty for us to be certain that these are references at all, and if they are, how far they are different from ritual *aischrologia*. Some scholars have even posited that Aristophanes' mythological parody is a direct reflection of cultic *aischrologia*, but there can be little evidence for his intent.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶³ Aristophanes, *Frogs*, 372-439. This theory has been discussed by Graf, *Eleusis und die orphische Dichtung*, 40-50; and Richardson, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, 214.

⁴⁶⁴ *Wasps*, 1360-1369. The connection is based on the (somewhat disputable) idea that physical or verbal abuse combined with nudity seems to have characterized all cultic *tothasmos*: Jeffrey S. Ruston, "Wasps 1360-1369: Philokleon's *twqasmos*," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, Vol. 81 (1977), 157-161. 161. This connection between the passage and Eleusis was first proposed by Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Glaube der Hellenen*. Berlin: Weidmannsche, 1932. 53; and was followed by Karl Kerényi in *Symbolae Osloenses* 36 (1960), 11-16; as well as Burkert, *Homo Necans*, 278. The most detailed study of the issue is that of Ruston, who, based on the fact that Philocleon is acting as if he were a youth in this scene, and furthermore as if his son were his father, proposes that the Eleusinian festival was perhaps a special time for the young to mock their elders.

⁴⁶⁵ The realization of the probability of this connection was early: see, for example, Lewis Leaming Forman, ed. *Aristophanes' Clouds*. New York: American Book Company, 1915, claiming that "the comic license of the festival-season was so ample as to permit ridicule for the moment even of divinity itself." 43. More developed articulations came later, though they, too, suffer from a certain necessary circularity of argumentation: see, for example, Enzo Degani, "Insulto ed Escrologia in Aristofane," *Dioniso* 57 (1987), pp 31-47. Halliwell's is the most comprehensive argument, theorizing that Old Comedy is in itself a form of ritual laughter, as shown by its tendency towards *aischrologia*-like speech and place within Dionysiac festivals. As well, Halliwell thinks it significant that Aristophanes makes references to or incorporates elements of ritual laughter. Stephen Halliwell, "Le Rire Rituel et la Nature de l'Ancienne Comédie Attique," in *Le rire des*

In the end, what it is possible to conclude about the actual contents of *aischrologia*? Much of its “mockery” seems to have been talk about sexual matters, with a use of cruder than usual vocabulary, and with this talk directed at specific others, whether members of the audience or absent rivals. Cultures the world over know that merely suggesting that some given other is involved in sexual activity is enough to count as a good joke and cause general laughter.

Review of Scholarship on Greek Aischrologia

As the preceding survey shows, ancient sources give few indications of the meaning or ritual purpose of *aischrologia*. Thus, scholars have had to fill in the gaps.

Before the mid-twentieth century, most scholars refused to believe that humor had anything to do with ancient mythology, ritual, or religion. For example, Ridgeway wrote about the *gephurismos* ritual that “no sane person would maintain that this indecency formed any part of the sacred rites of Eleusis,” and maintained that similar “jest and

Grecs: anthropologie du rire en Grèce ancienne. Ed. Marie-Laurence Desclos. Grenoble: Millon, 2000. pp. 155-168. 156. It is probable that Aristophanes is referring to cultic laughter in episodes such as the mocking of the hero by his drunken father in *Wasps* 1360-1369, as has been pointed out by Ruston, “*Wasps* 1360-1369”; however, the specific examples given by Halliwell in support of this point are sometimes questionable. For instance, Halliwell maintains that the priestesses who whisper encouragements to adultery into the ears of female celebrants during the Haloa, as described by the scholiast to Lucian’s *Dialogue of the Courtesans*, act in a way too close to be coincidental to the stereotypes of female behavior in Old Comedy. Halliwell, “Le Rire Rituel,” 158. Such a link is questionable because the scholiast is late, and may be influenced in his reporting precisely by these comic stereotypes. Also, Halliwell thinks that *aischrologia* is sometimes quasi-theatrical, as when, at Aegina, the groups of insulting women are described by Herodotus as organized in choruses (Herodotus, 5.83), which Halliwell compared to the exchanges of insults between the half-choruses in the *Lysistrata*. Halliwell, “Le Rire Rituel,” 159. This similarity could be more a product of Old Comedy’s evolution from religious festivals than from any direct connection of Comedy and *aischrologia*.

gestures” elsewhere “had no connection whatever with the ceremonial which gave them opportunity.”⁴⁶⁶ By contrast, I will adopt the recent scholarly position that *aischrologia* was indeed an integral part of Greek religion, as ritual laughter is a part of many other religions, and that it had some function within this religion instead of being a mockery of it or a product of forgetfulness.⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶⁶ William Ridgeway, *Dramas and Dramatic Dances of Non-European Races in Special Reference to the Origin of Greek Tragedy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915. 404. Hewitt saw a connection between humorous ritual and agricultural festivals, but argued that the joking was not an original part of these rituals; instead, this joking was a product of the growth of rationalistic doubt in the ability of agricultural rituals to bring rain or encourage the coming of spring: Joseph William Hewitt, “Religious Burlesque in Aristophanes and Elsewhere,” *American Journal of Philology*, 38.2 (1917), pp. 176-185. 183-184. Christol held that myths are only comic once their original meaning has been forgotten. He gives as an example the myth of Eurystheus taking refuge in the pithos from Herakles and the Boar, which he thinks was originally a myth “explaining” fermentation, susceptible to comic readings only once that “meaning” was forgotten: Alain Christol, “Lecture Comique des Mythes Oublies,” in *Le Rire des Anciens*, ed. Monique Trédé and Philippe Hoffmann. Paris: Presses de l’Ecole Normale Supérieure, 1998. The interpretation of the Eurystheus myth as being “about” fermentation adopted by Christol is that of Georges Dumézil, “Un myth relatif à la fermentation de la bière,” *Annuaire de l’EPHE (Sciences religieuses)* (1936-1937), pp. 5-15.

Others have claimed that *aischrologia* was equally as incomprehensible to Greeks and moderns, with Dover arguing that “to the ordinary Greek festive and ceremonial occasions were the primary constituent of religion; theology came a very bad second. He therefore continued in religious observances which had developed over the centuries in response to human needs, but he did not ask himself ‘What is the nature of a god who expects sacrifices but also accepts mockery?’” Dover, *Aristophanic Comedy*, 33.

⁴⁶⁷ Another trend in scholarly interest in *aischrologia* is an attention to *aischrologia* as an origin for certain forms of Greek poetry. Scholars have proposed ritual *aischrologia* as a model for iambic poetry, for the abusive joking in Greek comic poets, especially Aristophanes, and for the competitive “capping” seen in certain genres of Greek poetry: see C. Carey, “Archilochus and Lycambes,” *CQ*, 36.1 (1986), 60-67. 65; and Ralph Rosen, *Old Comedy and the Iambographic Tradition*, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988. A possible cultic background for the abuse in Old Comedy is discussed in Henderson, *Maculate Muse*, 13-18; Xavier Riu, *Dionysism and Comedy*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999. 237-42; and Halliwell, “The uses of laughter,” 294-96. *Aischrologia* and “capping” have been connected by R. Merkelbach, “BOYKOΔΙΑΣΤΑΙ (der Wettgesang der Hirten),” *Rheinisches Museum* 99 (1956), pp. 97-133. 127-31; and Beatrix

This type of scholarship is of two types: some studies focusing on its performers while others examine the effect of this performance on society.

Feminist scholars of Greek culture explore the importance that *aischrologia* may have had for individual Greek women, especially in the context of women's festivals.⁴⁶⁸ These discussions stake much on the claim of sexual opposition in aiscrological rituals. Such theories become problematic when they claim that *aischrologia* is an exclusively female behavior. Brumfeld, for instance, interprets Aristotle as referring to women's festivals when he allows certain shameful rites to remain in the city, and she even claims that the *gephurismos* is a retention in the Eleusinian Mysteries of "certain archaic elements reminiscent of women's festivals," both of which claims have no basis in the evidence.⁴⁶⁹ Such attempts to make *aischrologia* a feminine discourse are made in order

Wallochny, *Streitszenen in der griechischen und römischen Komödie*. Tübingen: G. Narr, 1992. 19-20. McClure's objection to connecting the obscenity of the comic theater with ritual *aischrologia* because "ritual *aischrologia* had strong associations with women, whereas Attic Old Comedy was an overwhelmingly masculine genre," is not valid, since her gender categories are not tenatable, as is argued, below. McClure, *Spoken Like a Woman*, 215.

Collins, surveying the evidence on ritual joking and pointing to the major differences in the 'rules' for joking at different festivals, concludes that the forms of *aischrologia* are too various to be able to stand as direct ancestors of later abusive speech and literature: Derek Collins, *Master of the Game: Competition and Performance in Greek Poetry*. Cambridge (Mass.) and London: Harvard University Press, 2004. Appendix 1: "Ritual *Aischrologia*", 230. Collins' cautions should be taken into account even for the other type of research on *aischrologia*, that concerning its role in Greek religion, since here, too, scholars tend to gloss over the different forms and occasions of *aischrologia* in order to arrive at a single explanation for its purpose.

⁴⁶⁸ See, for example, the chapter on "Cultic Obscenity in Greece, Especially Attica" in O'Higgins, *Women and Humor*, 15-36. Discussing the abortifacient uses of some of the items consumed or handled during the Thesmophoria, O'Higgins even suggests that "the sexual jesting and mockery may have functioned, in part, to transmit a variety of information." 25.

⁴⁶⁹ Brumfeld, "*Aporreta*," 68-69. McClure at times recognizes that *aischrologia* is not an exclusively female speech genre but at others discusses "the idea of a separate women's

to read it as an opportunity for women to speak freely about their world, during which they “showed the ritual and social power, normally masked by silent submissiveness, of the tribe of women.”⁴⁷⁰ Of course, some of those who are interested in the use of *aischrologia* by women realize that its use by men is equally well attested. McClure attempts to overcome this difficulty by identifying two different types of *aischrologia*, one male and one female, and even theorizes what different kinds of jokes men and women would have made – political and sexual, respectively.⁴⁷¹ This is not the way to solve the problem of the different genders’ involvement with *aischrologia*, especially since it is difficult to categorize utterances of which not a single example survives.⁴⁷²

culture with its own exclusionary speech practices, like *aischrologia*”. McClure, *Spoken Like a Woman*, 47, 37.

⁴⁷⁰ Brumfeld, “*Aporreta*,” 74. Versnel takes a similar view of *aischrologia* in his “Festival for Bona Dea and the Thesmophoria,” 38. These views ultimately stem from the readings of Winkler and Zeitlin: Winkler, *Constraints of Desire*, 188-209; and Zeitlin, “Cultic Models of the Female.”

⁴⁷¹ “The two types of *aischrologia* involves in male and female fertility cults may reflect a gender-based speech distinction: the scant evidence for the women’s festivals suggests that the content of their obscenity was implicitly heterosexual and probably not political... whereas the personal invective characteristic of Dionysian rites seems to have had predominantly political overtones, although it made use of sexual language.” McClure, *Spoken Like a Woman*, 217. There have been some modern attempts to test gender differences in reactions to humor, with results indicating that males rate sexual and hostile humor as funnier than females do; however, such results would seem to be very much influenced by modern culture, and thus are not immediately applicable to ancient culture. See, for instance, Norbert Mundorf *et al.*, “Gender Differences in Humor Appreciation,” *Humor*, 1.3 (1988), pp. 231-243.

⁴⁷² O’Higgins, another scholar to focus on women’s *aischrologia*, also proposes a content, though with more hesitation than McClure: she argues that, given the abortifacient uses of some of the items consumed during the Thesmophoria, the sexual jesting of the *aischrologia* may have functioned to transmit information about birth control. If plausible, this would hardly explain the *aischrologia* at any other festival. O’Higgins, *Women and Humor*, 25. Similar theories have been proposed for modern

Those who claim that *aischrologia* was a female behavior often rely on the myth of Demeter and Iambe/Baubo and the sources which describe women at the Thesmophoria imitating the jokes that cheered the goddess. Since this is merely one of several aetiologies for ritual mockery, a universal connection between *aischrologia* and women cannot be made. Diodorus Siculus, when describing the Eleusis festival, uses male pronouns to indicate the persons using *aischrologia* in imitation of the myth, and so perhaps even the *aischrologia* of Demetrian festivals was used by both sexes to a greater extent than modern scholars assume.⁴⁷³ Burkert, for one, has pointed out the evidence for male participation in Demeter cults: on Paros, there was even a male society, the *Kabarnoi*, who held sacrificial banquets in honor of Demeter Thesmophoros.⁴⁷⁴

The other main strand of interpretation of *aischrologia* does not separate male from female, but rather ritual behavior from everyday life. Some of these theories posit that *aischrologia* would have operated as a sort of “safety valve.” Henderson contrasts the public use of obscenity and insult during festivals with what he takes to be a cultural

joking – see Yan Zhao, “The Information-Conveying Aspect of Jokes,” *Humor* 1.3 (1988), pp. 279-298.

⁴⁷³ Diod. Sic. 5.4.7, “And it is their [masculine plural] custom during these days to indulge in coarse language (*aischrologein*) as they associate one with another, the reason being that by such coarseness (*dia tan aischrologein*) the goddess, grieved though she was at the rape of Kore, burst into laughter.”

⁴⁷⁴ Burkert, *GR*, 245, citing: Antimachos, fr. 67 (Wyss); Steph. Byz. s.v. Paros; *IG* XII 5.292. Burkert also adduces the representation, in Polygnotos’ painting in the *Stoa Poikile* in Athens, of Tellis and Kleoboia bringing sacred things from Paros to Thasos; the terracotta statuettes of youths holding votive gifts found at the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Corinth (citing Bookidis and Fischer, “Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore on Acrocorinth: Preliminary Report IV,” 317. Burkert concludes that “The societies of men surrounding the Asia Minor Meter may also be recalled; it is possible that cults oriented towards men and cults oriented towards women have overlapped; but they obviously complement one another very well.” Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 245.

norm forbidding speech about shameful matters or insulting topics, arguing that the occasional, contained, freedom of *aischrologia* served cathartic purposes for an ordinarily overly-restrained population.⁴⁷⁵ Similarly, Halliwell points to the “controlling convention” which marks ritual laughter as acceptable and legitimate: the fact that it occurs during “predetermined and correspondingly *anticipated* moments,” and that it employs customary props, such as masks or the wagons of Dionysian festivals.⁴⁷⁶ He theorizes that such rules for mockery made the festival into a “self-contained form,” which meant that its actions would not have the consequences that they would in normal life.⁴⁷⁷

It is true that Greek literature displays much concern to control insults, but such concern should probably be read as an indication of just how widespread everyday insulting behavior was. Halliwell himself writes about the commonness of public mockery and insult in the non-ritual life of Greece.⁴⁷⁸ One key sign of the connection between ritual and everyday mockery is the language used to describe both, since every verb of mockery used in a ritual context is also used in a secular one. For example,

⁴⁷⁵ Henderson, *Maculate Mus*, .14. The same theory of the “release” provided by *aischrologia* appears in Dover, *Aristophanic Comedy*, 32-33; 125; and Kenneth J. Reckford, *Aristophanes’ Old-and-New Comedy*. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1987. 461. Reckford would also believe, like Fluck, that *aischrologia* serves a “magic” function. 461.

⁴⁷⁶ Halliwell, “The uses of laughter,” 291.

⁴⁷⁷ Halliwell, “The uses of laughter,” 292. See also Halliwell, “Le Rire Rituel.” His forthcoming book on Greek laughter will feature a chapter on ritual laughter.

⁴⁷⁸ Halliwell, “The uses of laughter,” 286-289.

tothadein is often used to describe ritual mockery,⁴⁷⁹ but is equally often used to describe people jeering at one another in a non-ritual context; for example, in Plato, *Republic* 474a, where the verb describes the behavior of people who will jeer at the philosopher.⁴⁸⁰ Even the words *aischrologia* and *aischrologein* are used more often in non-ritual than ritual contexts.⁴⁸¹ Aristotle, in his *Rhetoric*, for instance, uses the concept to indicate common or debased words as opposed to beautiful ones, his example being the difference between calling dawn “rosy-fingered” as opposed to the undignified “red-fingered.”⁴⁸² Another difficulty in positing certain festivals as occasions for cathartic, consequence-free insulting is that such behavior such as that which I have been describing during festivals met with punishment. Thus, a special assembly heard *probolai* - complaints from individuals accusing others of misconduct during the City Dionysia - and Demosthenes records that a citizen named Ktesikles was condemned to death for hitting

⁴⁷⁹ In Herodotus, 2.60 and 5.83; Aristotle, *Politics* 1336b. 14-17; Konon, 49; Schol. on Lucian, *Dialogue of Courtesans* 7.4; Hesch. s.v. *Stenia*; Apollod. 1.5.1; Diodorus Sic. 5.4.6; Pausanias 7.27.9; Cornutus *theol. cap.* 28 (ed. C. Lang, Leipzig, 1881).

⁴⁸⁰ It is also used in non-ritual contexts in, for example: Aristophanes, *V.* 1368; Theocritus. 16.9; Plato, *Hp. Ma.* 290a; Aristotle, *Frogs*, 1381a34; and Herodotus, 7.103.

⁴⁸¹ To describe ritual mockery: Plut. *def. orac.* 14 = *Moralia* 417c; Diod. Sic. 5.4.7; Aristotle, *Politics*, 1336b14; and Stobaeus 4.2.24. For their use to describe non-ritual mockery, see Karsten Siems, *Aischrologia: Das Sexuell-Hässliche im antiken Epigramm*. Dissertation, Gerog-August-Universität, Göttingen, 1974. 220. Siems, who is mainly interested in non-ritual *aischrologia*, collects the following instances of the word used without connections to ritual: Anaximenes, *Ars Rhet.* 35.18; Aristotle, *EN* 4.1128a 23 and *Rh.* 3.1405b 9; Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 2.4.48; 2.5.48 and *Strom.* 2.23.145; Demosthenes, *Ep.* 4.11; Didache, 3.3 and 5.1; Diomedes Grammaticus, 1.450.32; Epictetus, *Ench.* 33.16, and *Diss.*, 4.3.2; Eusebius, *PE*, 5.4.5; Eusthathius, *Comm. Ad. Hom. Od.* 1490.17; Hippocrates, *de Arte I* and *Epid.* 3.17.11; Paul, *Col.* 3.8; *POxy.* 410.76-78; Plato, *Republic* 3.395e; Pollux, *Onom.* 2.120 and 2.129; Polybius, 8.11.8 and 12.13.3; Sacerdos Grammaticus, VI.453.19; and Xenophon, *Ath.* 5.6.

⁴⁸² Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 3.1405b 9.

one of his enemies with a whip during the procession of this festival.⁴⁸³ This was an insult, but obviously not one with festal license. A better means of distinguishing ritual from non-ritual insult must be found.

Both types of the interest in *aischrologia* show relative unconcern about its actual role in religion, which only a few scholars have attempted to describe. Reinach believed that shameful speech and gestures in Greek ritual were meant as magical acts intended to drive away evil spirits, such as the one possessing Demeter, and reanimate the sleeping forces of nature.⁴⁸⁴ Propp, though he drew on Reinach's essay, rightly criticized him for an unsystematic treatment of the subject, for Reinach makes claims rather than arguments and refers to only a few rituals.⁴⁸⁵ A more modern, but still vague view of *aischrologia*'s use holds that it somehow allowed the Greeks to more closely commune with their gods by balancing the fearful and transcendent aspects of divinity with a laughing familiarity.⁴⁸⁶ This is an intriguing idea, but needs to be much more concretely and specifically applied to Greek rituals.

Burkert has put forward what is currently the most nuanced view of *aischrologia*. He holds that much of the ritual of Greek religion, particularly its use of masks, was

⁴⁸³ Pickard-Cambridge, *Dramatic Festivals of Athens*, 68-69. Demosthenes, *against Meidias*, 180.

⁴⁸⁴ Salomon Reinach, *Cultes, Mythes, et Religions*. Paris: E. Leroux, 1905-23. pp. 109-129. Reprinted from "Le Rire Rituel," *Revue de l'Université de Bruxelles* (1911), pp. 585-602.

⁴⁸⁵ V. Propp, "Ritual Laughter in Folklore," trans. Maxine L. Bronstein and Lee Haring, in *Theory and History of Folklore*, ed. Anatoly Liberman. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984. pp. 124-146. 126.

⁴⁸⁶ Ballabriga, "Approche du burlesque divin dans l'Antiquité," 131.

meant to transpose the worshipper into “a new and unknown world.”⁴⁸⁷ For Burkert, this new realm is “a world of absurdity and aggressive obscenity.”⁴⁸⁸ The prime example of this is the use of absurdly and aggressively large phalloi in many Greek rituals, and because those who operate or wear these phalloi are men, Burkert conceives of *aischrologia* and female self-exposures the female counterparts of these phallic activities.⁴⁸⁹ Even though Burkert seems to claim that *aischrologia* has a mostly female voice, when he discusses its place in Greek religion he thinks of it mainly a matter of the joint mocking of the sexes, and indeed he cites only those sources on *aischrologia* which discuss this sexual character.⁴⁹⁰ The ultimate purpose of this type of sexual *aischrologia*,

⁴⁸⁷ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 104.

⁴⁸⁸ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 104. It should be noted that Burkert elsewhere explains the *gephurismos* as “a contrast to what is to follow; one must tear oneself loose from this in order to cross the mountain and reach...Eleusis.” Burkert, *Homo Necans*, 278. Somewhat similar to Burkert’s position in *Greek Religion* is that of Riu, who hypothesizes that insults can serve as a type of welcome, so that the *gephurismos* worked as a welcome into the “something different” of the Mysteries. Riu, *Dionysism and Comedy*, 238.

⁴⁸⁹ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 104.

⁴⁹⁰ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 104. His main examples are the Stenia, the festival on Aegina, and the sacrifice to Apollo Aigletes at Anaphe. Other scholars distort the evidence in other ways to follow their particular theories: Detienne, for example, claims that “the Thesmophoria [was] held in an atmosphere of grave, almost harsh solemnity.” Marcel Detienne, *The Gardens of Adonis: Spices in Greek Mythology*, trans. Janet Lloyd. Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: The Humanities Press, 1977. 78. As well, though they purport to describe what we know of the rites of the Thesmophoria, and includes the fact that women mourning in imitation of Demeter, the authors of *Women in the Classical World* do not mention *aischrologia*. Elaine Fantham *et al*, *Women in the Classical World: Image and Text*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994. 87. Foxhall, too, while writing about connections between the Thesmophoria, Haloa, and Skira, all of which featured *aischrologia*, mentions only in passing the “raucous” character of the Haloa and nothing at all about the others: Lin Foxhall, “Women’s ritual and men’s work in ancient Athens,” in *Women in Antiquity: New Assessments*, ed. Richard Hawley and Barbara Levick. London and New York: Routledge, 1995. pp. 97-110. 104.

he proposes, is to play up the antagonism of the sexes and then give it release through lampoonery: “[b]y plumbing the extremes the just mean is meant to emerge,” that is, that the sexes are actually dependent on each other.⁴⁹¹ Some instances of *aischrologia* do not seem to directly address the relations of men and women, but we will return to Burkert’s idea of *aischrologia* as an activity that creates an extreme in order to reaffirm a social truth.

A related discussion of aspects of Greek religion, concerned not solely with *aischrologia* but with all examples of ritual license in the cult of Dionysos, is that of Hoffman.⁴⁹² He thinks that all this ritual license – what he identifies as “male transvestism, rude and abusive behavior, overt sexual display, excessive wine drinking, and social reversals” - can be interpreted by anthropological theories of the “rite of reversal,” relying especially on Turner’s theories of the uses of liminal states.⁴⁹³ Hoffman

⁴⁹¹ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 104-05. For an attempt to posit a function of reconciliation of the sexes through *aischrologia* through a comparison with sexually-based insult rituals in other cultures, see Reckford, *Aristophanes’ Old-and-New Comedy*, 463. Riu proposes a link to the African-American competitive insulting known as “the dozens” or “signifying.” Riu, *Dionysism and Comedy*, 1999.

⁴⁹² R. J. Hoffman, “Ritual License and the Cult of Dionysos,” *Athenaeum* 67 (1989), pp. 91-115.

⁴⁹³ Male transvestism: During the mockery “from the wagons” at the Anthesteria, some of the mockers are said to have been dressed as women and to have performed ‘womanly’ dances. For sources, see Burkert, *Homo Necans*, 229 n. 18. Also, ephebes are described as dressed in female clothing for the *komos* following a Dionysia in Philostratus, *Imag.* 1.2. Rude and abusive behavior: instances of *aischrologia*. Overt sexual display: processions with phalloi during Dionysiac celebrations; for example, the *pompe* in Alexandria organized by Ptolemy II Philadelphus featuring a 180 foot gold phallus on a cart, tipped by a gold star 9 feet in diameter, decorated by fillets (described in Athenaeus, 201e). Excessive wine drinking: Hoffman cites Athenaeus 363b and 427a, where it is said that devotees of Dionysos were allowed to get drunk on feast days in order to worship him. Social reversals: Hoffman’s evidence for this is the most questionable. It is true that

argues that Dionysos is a god of the liminal, because of his involvement with opposites, his two births, his physical appearance, and his social interactions, especially his preference for fringes of society or the wild. Hoffman proposes that the liminality of Dionysos' nature is replicated in liminal activities of ritual license in his cult.⁴⁹⁴ The social purpose of ritual reversal is to show the importance of social rules as demonstrated in their temporary absence. Again, like Burkert's theories, Hoffmann's views are important in that they contain the idea of *aischrologia* and ritual license in general having the ability to change the worshipper's state of mind and draw him or her into a new relationship with a divinity, but we still lack an understanding of just what the Greeks thought that this form of worship might accomplish.

Aischrologia and the vase imagery

Several factors connect the Kabirion, Anthesteria, and Sam Wide vases to *aischrologia*. First, the vases are associated with sites where *aischrologia* was definitely

slaves could drinking during the Choes drinking contest (an inscription records funds for government-owned slaves to celebrate it: *IG II*² 1672.204), but how much this indicates "social reversal" is unclear. Hoffman's claim that the Choes feast is composed of inversions, as a "silent party in which guests supplied their own provisions, in which social intercourse was banned, and in which social, class, age, and legal status of the participant was largely ignored," seem also exaggerated.

⁴⁹⁴ It is perhaps not clear why this is a better explanation than the one that Hoffmann rejects, namely that the fertility-promoting aspects of Dionysos are replicated in fertility-magic activities. Hoffmann is also dedicated to reading almost every ritual in Dionysiac cult as a reversal; for example, he thinks that the *hieros gamos* was a ritual of reversal because it humiliated the archon and his wife by making him a cuckold and her an adulteress, because she is supposed to have had intercourse with Dionysos – even though this was a role played by her husband. Another weakness in Hoffmann's analysis is that ritual license was also associated with the cult of Demeter, not just Dionysus – a fact which he mentions but does not explain. As well, slaves were allowed various freedoms, including, explicitly, freedom of speech, during the Thessalian festival of the Peloria, for Zeus Peloros – Zeus not being very much of a liminal god.

or probably practiced. We have seen that the Kabirion sanctuary was the site of mystery rituals. Hints in literary sources and on the vases themselves, which depict Kabirios in the iconography of Dionysos, suggest that at least some rituals at the Kabirion had a Dionysiac character – perhaps comedies were even performed at the Kabirion, as they were during other Dionysiac festivals in Greece, most notably in Athens. Thus it is possible that *aischrologia* rituals took place at the Kabirion, either in connection to the mysteries or with other Dionysiac rituals. The *aischrologia* of the Anthesteria is indicated in ancient sources. I have also argued for the probability that Dionysos was worshipped along with Demeter and Kore at Corinth. This choice of deities indicates that *aischrologia* was possible there, since Demeter, Kore, and Dionysos received *aischrologia* worship at so many other sites.

Next, the contents of the images mirrors what we know about the contents of *aischrologia*. The images contain sexual humor, especially sexual humor focused on the display of grotesque genitals: those of the Sphinx, for example. There is also the genital display of the Kabirion cups and the sexy subjects of Anthesteria ware, such as the satyr surprising a woman, the drunken man knocking down a door to get to his wife or a prostitute, even the scene of mules copulating. As well, the mythological parodies with both male and female characters are drawn from stories of notable antagonism between the sexes: Odysseus and Circe, Helen and Menelaos, etc. This echoes the mockery between the sexes during *aischrologia*. The celebrating revelers on the Kabirion vases are likely portraits of the types of revelry at *aischrologia* rituals.

Another significant indication of the function of these comic images is the fact that these vases were vessels used for the serving of wine. As we have seen, wine-

drinking was an important feature of festivals with *aischrologia* – a connection which is further supported by the archeological evidence.⁴⁹⁵

A Comparative Anthropology of Ritual Mockery

Despite the interaction of the textual and visual sources, we still do not know the intended purpose of *aischrologia*. How else to understand it? The majority of scholars have attempted to elucidate Greek *aischrologia* by comparing it with other aspects of ancient culture. Another possibility is to compare these Greek rituals with other instances of ritual laughter in other periods, religions, and cultures.⁴⁹⁶ Such comparisons might help make clear what is unique and what is shared in Greek ritual laughter, offer some hints as to the likely quality of the utterances and their performers, and also allow for the use of anthropological theories of the causes and purposes of rituals involving laughter.

⁴⁹⁵ Other well-excavated examples, not discussed here, of sanctuaries showing evidence of ritual feasting include the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Corinth: see Nancy Bookidis, "Ritual Dining at Corinth," in *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches*. Ed. Nanno Marinatos and Robin Hägg. London and New York: Routledge, 1995. pp. 45-61; the sanctuary of Poseidon at Isthmia: see Elizabeth R. Gebhard, "The Early Sanctuary of Poseidon at Isthmia," *AJA*, 91.3 (1987), pp. 475-476, and also her "The evolution of a pan-Hellenic sanctuary: from archaeology towards history at Isthmia," in *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches*. Ed. Nanno Marinatos and Robin Hägg. London and New York: Routledge, 1995. pp. 154-177, as well as Catherine Morgan, "The Evolution of a Sacral 'Landscape': Isthmia, Perachora, and the Early Corinthia State," in *Placing the Gods: Sanctuaries and Sacred Space in Ancient Greece*. Ed. Susan E. Alcock and Robin Osborne. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994. pp. 105-142; the Heraion at Samos: see U. Kron, "Archaisches Kultgeschirr aus dem Heraion von Samos. Zu einer speziellen Gattung von archaischem Trink- und Tafelgeschirr mit Dipinti," in *Ancient Greek and Related Pottery: Proceedings of the International Vase Symposium in Amsterdam, 12-15 April 1984*. H.A.G. Brijder, ed. Amsterdam: Allard Pierson Museum, 1984. pp. 292-297 and Helmut Kyrieleis, "The Heraion at Samos," in *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches*. Ed. Nanno Marinatos and Robin Hägg. London and New York: Routledge, 1995. pp. 125-153.

⁴⁹⁶ Halliwell has advocated a reconsideration of Greek ritual laughter within the perspective of a general anthropology: Halliwell, "Le Rire Rituel," 155-156.

Anthropologists identify several different types of ritual mockery or humor, but not all of these can be successfully compared with the Greek rituals.⁴⁹⁷ I have chosen examples of actual ritual, not merely humorous mythology.⁴⁹⁸ The chosen rituals involve joyful attitudes, are confined to specific occasions, are considered to make actual contributions to religious life, and have enough available information about their antecedents and purposes to provide valuable comparisons.⁴⁹⁹ The general content of the laughter-producing actions – speaking, singing, dancing, etc. – are ‘obscene’ or

⁴⁹⁷ Apte, in her survey of anthropological studies of ritual humor, produces a summary definition of the ritual humor of interest to anthropologists: “Ritual humor is characterized by purposeful verbal and nonverbal behavior by individuals and groups in which persons of high status and authority, foreigners, and rituals and ceremonies are parodied, sexual activities are simulated in an exaggerated manner, and simulated defecation and urination are carried out with scatological overtones.” Mahadev L. Apte, “Humor Research, Methodology, and Theory in Anthropology,” in *Handbook of Humor Research, Vol. 1*. Paul McGhee and Jeffrey Goldstein, eds. New York: Springer Verlag, 1983. pp. 183-212. 190. These “and”s should be taken cautiously— not all of these types of mockery take place at the same rituals.

⁴⁹⁸ Thus, for example, the Trickster figure will not be discussed. For the Trickster, see Paul Radin, *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology*. New York: Schocken Books, 1956; for a bibliography on Trickster studies, see Mahadev L. Apte, “Humor Research, Methodology, and Theory in Anthropology,” in *Handbook of Humor Research, Vol. 1*. Paul McGhee and Jeffrey Goldstein, eds. New York: Springer Verlag, 1983. pp. 183-212. 192-194.

⁴⁹⁹ A note about my use of the terms ‘ritual humor,’ ‘ritual laughter,’ ‘ritual mockery,’ ‘ritual obscenity,’ and so on: they very often overlap, both in my usage here and the usage of the anthropologists from whom I draw information. The concepts of obscenity and humor are especially linked, since humans seem universally to find sexual anatomies and acts funny. Still, not all of the anthropological sources on my chosen rituals explicitly mention laughter as a reaction to ritual obscenity. This could be because there was no laughter, or because the observers, especially those of the early colonial period, were embarrassed by the obscenities and transferred this reaction onto their audience, or simply because in a hurried account they do not mention it. The majority of anthropological descriptions of ritual obscenity do mention that the audience is amused by or laughs at it, and so some examples of ritual obscenity for which the audience reaction is not mentioned will be used, albeit cautiously.

‘insulting,’ in that what is said would truly be obscene or insulting if it were said in non-ritual circumstances. In all of the societies under consideration, such speech and actions are not permitted in everyday life, whether they are either considered taboo or, at least, very impolite.⁵⁰⁰ This is important for understanding the ritual use of obscenity, since in these cultures it is something special and set apart.⁵⁰¹ For convenience, I use the words obscene and insulting, but with this distinction kept in mind.⁵⁰² Appendix 4 discusses

⁵⁰⁰ Obscenity not tolerated in everyday life: “in daily life considerable modesty is shown in connection with such matters [sexual relations].” *The Akamba in British East Africa*. 1920. 50; “Under ordinary circumstances it would be reckoned taboo for women to utter such things [about sex] in the presence of men.” Edwin W. Smith and A. M. Dale, *The Ila-speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia*, London: Macmillan, 1920. Vol II, 113; “Some of the formula [exchanged by men and women during initiation ceremonies] contain expressions [about sex] which are taboo at other times” Henri Alexandre Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe*. London: Macmillan, 1927. Vol. I, 80; “The insults which are taboo are now allowed [during the building of a new village].” Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe*. 315-316. Probably the closest to the Greek use of obscenity is that of the A-Zande: “Obscene expressions of abuse are common amongst the A-Zande, as they are amongst ourselves, as aids to vituperation. But such expressions are certainly not prescribed, and frequently lead to disturbance and legal proceedings [outside of their ritual use].” E. E. Evans-Pritchard, “Some Collective Expressions of Obscenity in Africa,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 59 (1929), pp. 311-331. 320.

⁵⁰¹ The connection of obscenity to ritual laughter points to another, structural reason why modern humor cannot be profitably compared with *aischrologia*. In Greece as in the other cultures whose rituals are discussed below, obscenity is normally prohibited and punished. Such strictures have been much loosed for the modern world at least since the Renaissance, but this modern acceptance of obscenity in everyday life means that it cannot have a special ritual function. We are no longer particular enough about obscenity for it to be religious. Too, at the same time that obscenities are accepted in everyday life, there has been a movement to exclude them from religion (especially since the Reformation and Counter-Reformation). The modern theologians of laughter are not promoting obscene laughter.

⁵⁰² I thus use this word in a far different sense from Mary Douglas, who defines “obscene” with a negative value and as opposite from jokes, even sexual jokes: Douglas, “The Social Control of Cognition,” 157. That this is merely a difference in terminology will be clear when Douglas’ theories are discussed, below.

some of the types of ritual laughter that do not fall into these categories, including laughter in the Catholic Church.

Comparing episodes of laughter may seem strange, but, as many of its students have noted, ritual laughter is highly stereotyped, its words and actions subject to norms and limits, and even its festal license predefined in duration and scope, with its festal frame is indicated by costuming, disguises, customary props, and conventional days.⁵⁰³ Thus, ritual laughter is as much subject to comparison as are other ritual events – although as much caution is needed as with any type of comparison, since preconceptions, especially those about religion, often cause us to see only what we wish to find in other cultures.⁵⁰⁴

For the convenience of the reader, I will refer to the anthropological materials only generally in the body of the text, leaving the specifics of description and bibliography for Appendix 5, in which these details are laid out in the order in which they are discussed here, and referred to by number (I.1, I.2, etc).

Ritual humor, as recorded by anthropologists, tends to accompany ceremonies of marriage and initiation, agricultural ceremonies, and mortuary ceremonies.

Marriage and Initiation

⁵⁰³ Pierre L. Van den Berghe, “Institutional Licence and Normative Stability,” *Cahiers d’Etudes Africaines*, 3 (1963), pp. 413-423, 421.

Appendix 6 details some of the theories of ritual laughter summarized in or not adopted by the main body of my text.

⁵⁰⁴ David Freedberg, “Warburg’s Mask: A Study in Idolatry,” in *Anthropologies of Art*, ed. Mariët Westermann. Williamstown, Mass.: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2005. pp. 3-25. See also Davis Freedberg, “Pathos a Oraibi: Ciò che Warburg non vide”, in Claudia Cieri Via and Pietro Montani, eds., *LoSguardo di Giano, Aby Warburg fra tempo e memoria*, Turin: Nino Aragno, 2004, pp. 569-611.

Ritual obscenity often accompanies rituals of marriage and of initiation, especially in cultures where initiation is linked to a sexual coming-of-age. In these initiation ceremonies, the use of obscene language, jokes, and songs by participants is encouraged (I.1, I.2). Initiates are often segregated in gendered groups or taken care of by tenders of the same gender (I.1, I.2), and the obscenities are sometimes directed towards members of the other gender (I.2.). The obscene speeches and songs are overwhelmingly concerned with sexual acts, focusing both on the deviant – praising the pleasures of prostitution and adultery (I.2), as during the Haloa – and on the acceptable – the production of children within marriage (I.2). Initiations can also feature obscene dances (I.4, I.8, II.1) with either the exposure of genitalia (I.3) or play with models or imitations of genitalia (I.3, I.5), even the pantomiming of copulation (I.3). Similarly, initiation into women's cults can feature female priestess pantomiming intercourse and masturbation (I.6). Marriages, too, feature obscene songs and dances, sexual joking, bawdy pranks, and humorously sexually explicit gifts (I.5, I.7).

Similar connections of human fertility and ceremonial obscenity can be found in many European cultures. In Holland and France in the historical period, for example, women visiting a new mother to celebrate a birth would tell bawdy jokes about sex.⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰⁵ Mariët Westermann, "How Was Jan Steen Funny? Strategies and Functions of Comic Painting in the Seventeenth Century," in *A Cultural History of Humour: From Antiquity to the Present Day*, ed. Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997. pp. 134-178. 159. Besides the depictions of this celebration in Jan Steen's paintings, Westermann cites, for Holland, Hieronymus Sweerts, *De Tien Vermakelijkheden van het Huwelijk* (1678), pp. 117-26 (reprinted as *De Tien Vermakelijkheden van het Huwelijk*, ed. E.K. Grootes and Rob Winkelman. Amsterdam: Em. Querido, 1988.), and, for France, an engraving by Abraham Bosse, "Visite a l'accouchee," from his series, *Le Mariage à la ville* (1633) (reprinted in Nicole Villa, *Le XVIIe Siècle vu par Abraham Bosse, Graveur du Roy*. Paris: R. Dacosta, 1967. pl. 60.

Agricultural Ceremonies

Ritual joking and obscenity is also often a feature of agricultural ceremonies, during which special tasks are often performed by gender-segregated groups who sing obscene songs about sexual activities or direct obscene speech at members of the other gender (II.1, II.2, II.3, II.4, II.5, II.6, II.7). In some cases, these tasks are a part of normal life, such as fishing (II.1) or regular rituals in honor of a female agricultural deity (II.2). In other cases, the ritual obscenities take place to avert natural disasters, especially drought (II.3, II.5, II.6).

Mortuary Ceremonies

The third major area in which ritual laughter occurs is during mortuary ceremonies. Funerals, either during burial itself or at some point, usually towards the end, of longer funerary ceremonies, often feature obscene songs (II.1, III.1, III.2, III.3, III.4, III.5, III.6), or lewd dances (III.3), which can include praise of adultery (III.2) and the showing or pantomiming of genitals (III.2). Longer, more elaborate funerary rituals tend to feature elaborated comic skits or performances, during which participants dress up as comic spirits, who harass each other and the spectators with pratfalls and improper actions (III.6, III.7). Native explanations for the connection of laughter and funerals focus on the use of laughter to cheer the mourners at the end of their mourning period and also to appease and send away the spirits of the dead.

More Complex Ceremonies

Somewhat similarly, there is a ritual involving laughter and childbirth in Yakut culture, when women gather on the third day after the birth in the house of the new mother. Sometime during this feast, a member will begin to laugh, and this is supposed to foretell the future birth of a child to her who laughs. A.A. Popova, *Jakutskij fol'klor* [*Yakut Folklore*]. Moscow and Leningrad: Sovetskij pisatel, 1936. 305.

Ritual clowns perform in various rituals whose meaning is usually difficult to establish (IV.1, IV.2). These clowns, costumed as comic or mischievous spirits, perform obscene jokes, slapstick, burlesque of the serious rituals which they accompany. Much of their humor is sexual in nature, with the addition of scatological components – they can handle or consume waste and trash of various sorts, including human waste. The function of such ritual clowns varies. When they perform among the Pueblo communities of the American Southwest, they are closely connected with rain ceremonies: their jumping dances are said by informants to represent rising clouds, and they pretend to have intercourse with a *kachina* costumed as ugly old woman, a burlesque on the deity Corn Maiden, telling each other that “‘[t]his old *Kachina* is impersonating the Corn Maiden; therefore we must have intercourse with her so that our corn will increase and our people will live in plenty.’”⁵⁰⁶ (IV.1)

⁵⁰⁶ Don C. Talayesva, *Sun Chief: The Autobiography of a Hopi Indian*. Leo W. Simmons, Ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942. 187, 190. For more on the ritual clowns of the Americas, see Appendix 4 and also Hieb, *The Hopi Ritual Clown*. 169-224. See also his “Meaning and Mismeaning: Toward an Understanding of the Ritual Clown,” in *New Perspectives on the Pueblos*, ed. Alfonso Ortiz. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1972. pp. 163-196. The earliest account of ritual clowning in the American Southwest was that of John G. Bourke, “The Urine Dance of the Zunis,” *American Association for Advancement of Science. Proceedings*, vol. 34 (1885), pp. 400-403. Reprinted in his *Scatologic Rites of All Nations*. Washington, D.C.: W.H. Lowdermilk, 1891. pp. 4-10. Other primary studies of Southwestern ritual clowning: F.H. Cushing, “Outlines of Zuni Creation Myths,” in *Thirteenth Annual Report, Bureau of Ethnology*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1896. pp. 325-447; J. Walter Fewkes, “A Few Summer Ceremonials at Zuni Pueblo,” *Journal of American Ethnology and Archaeology*, 1 (1891), pp. 1-62; Elsie Clews Parsons, “Notes on Zuni, Part I,” *Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association*, 4.3 (1917); Elsie Clews Parsons, “Winter and Summer Dance Series in Zuni in 1918,” *University of California Publications in American Archaeology & Ethnology*, 17.3 (1922), pp. 171-216; Julian Steward, “The Ceremonial Buffoon of the American Indian,” *Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts and Letters*, 14 (1930), pp. 187-207; Ruth L. Bunzell, *Introduction to Zuni Ceremonialism*. Bureau of American Ethnology, Forty-Seventh Annual Report.

The function of ritual clowns among the Indian tribes descended from the Maya in present-day Mexico has been obscured by cultural shift, since they now play their originally Mayan roles during Catholic ceremonies (IV.2). Still, that their obscene and even sacrilegious comments and jokes operate during burlesque marriage and healing ceremonies makes it clear that this ritual joking has connections to fertility and the averting of evil from the community, especially when clowns use exhibitions of genitalia or pantomimes of sex acts to drive off and ultimately ‘kill’ other masked characters who represent evil forces.

Anthropological Interpretations of Ritual Laughter

The frequent connections between ritual laughter and sexuality or between ritual laughter and mortality have lead anthropologists to conclude that such rituals are meant to encourage fertility, human or agricultural.⁵⁰⁷ Hence the frequency of ritual laughter

Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institute, 1932. Reprinted in her *Zuni Ceremonialism*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992; Elsie Clews Parsons, *Pueblo Indian Religion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939; Elsie Clews Parsons and Ralph L. Beals, “The Sacred Clowns of the Pueblo and Mayo-Yaqui Indians,” *American Anthropologist*, 36.4 (1934), pp. 491-514; Alexander M Stephen, *The Hopi Journal of Alexander M. Stephen*, ed. Elsie Clews Parsons. Columbia University Contributions to Anthropology, no. 23. Columbia University Press, New York, 1936; Don C. Talayesva, *Sun Chief: The Autobiography of a Hopi Indian*. Leo W. Simmons, Ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942; Vera Laski, *Seeking Life. Memoirs of the American Folklore Society*, vol. 50. Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1958. Another full-length study is Julian Haynes Steward, *The Clown in Native North America*. Diss, University of California, 1929. Reprinted New York: Garland Publishing, 1991. For the difficulties faced by modern scholars when investigating this subject, see David Freedberg, “Warburg’s Mask: A Study in Idolatry,” in *Anthropologies of Art*, ed. Mariët Westermann. Williamstown, Mass.: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2005. pp. 3-25.

⁵⁰⁷ Douglas concluded this for African ritual joking (including “joking relationships”): Douglas, “The Social Control of Cognition,” 147. That the same is true of other cultures has been demonstrated in the examples, above.

during marriage and initiation (when initiation is connected with the onset of puberty and especially in cultures in which initiated girls are expected to soon marry). Ritual obscenity can here serve a teaching purpose, instructing the young about sexual matters. Symbolically, it prepares individuals for sexual acts, as in wedding rituals which prepare a reluctant bride for her marriage (e.g., I.7). Especially if a society has hitherto been designed to keep a young girl from engaging in sexual relations, the wedding ceremony must establish a liminal state in which the breaking of this taboo is possible.⁵⁰⁸

The people who do such obscene joking during marriage and initiation ceremonies are commonly older than, if not far older than the bride or initiate (whether in reality or costume) (e.g., I.7). The clown's state of being past fertility balances the virgin bride's state of pre-fertility, and thus can operate to bring the bride to the happy medium

⁵⁰⁸ Werbner proposes this reading for Pakistani wedding rituals: Pnina Werbner, "The Virgin and the Clown: Ritual Elaboration in Pakistani Migrants' Weddings," *Man*, 21.2 (1986), pp. 227-250. 233.

Gilhus explains laughter's connection with human fertility symbolically, holding that laughter symbolically "opens" the body. For Gilhus, laughter is an opening of the body, and also pours forth from the body, and may thus be compared with ejaculation – hence the connection in fertility rites of symbols and practices connoting sexuality and birth to obscene joking and laughter: "Symbolically, these jokes refer to how the human body must be opened up for life to flow..." Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, *Laughing Gods, Weeping Virgins: Laughter in the History of Religion*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997. 3. Gilhus based this theory on Douglas' wider proposal that cultural beliefs about the body reflect that culture's social structure; for example, the ancient Greek city-state's xenophobia is expressed in a cultural disgust for foreign substances or objects entering bodily orifices: Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology*. London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1973. Similarly, Handelman argues that because ritual clowns often act in contradictory manners - violating social norms, backwards speech and behavior, eating inedible objects – they symbolically function during rituals to dissolve borders. Don Handelman, "The Ritual Clown: Attributes and Affinities." *Anthropos* 76 (1981), pp. 321-70. Douglas also correlates the frequency of laughter in general to levels of social control of bodily actions: in cultures with less social control of the body, bodily interruptions such as laughter will be more tolerated. Mary Douglas, "Do Dogs Laugh?: A Cross-Cultural Approach to Body Symbolism," in *Implicit Meanings*. London: Routledge, 1979. pp. 83-89. 89.

of active fertility. The strategy of provocation by extremes can also be seen in the habitual exaggeration of the joking speeches and actions – the praises of adultery and so on – which are also attempts to reach a desired state (marital fidelity) by balancing extremes.

The links of laughter to human fertility are mirrored in those that connect laughter to agricultural fertility. The majority of these ceremonies are connected to the change of seasons and the planting of crops or the beginning of the rains. This means that ritual laughter must operate for agricultural fertility in an analogous way to human fertility, where it too appears at the beginnings of the sexual activity that will lead to the production of children. The earth is opened by laughter, just as are human beings. This understanding of the bodily symbolism of laughter also accords with the general emphasis on the mouth, anus, and reproductive openings in the Greek vase imagery, especially if we adopt Bakhtin's insight that these openings are the ones that make the most contact with, and thus are best able to blur the line between, the body and the world.⁵⁰⁹

The second part of ritual laughter, its connection to mortuary rites, has not been so frequently studied, but I will draw some conclusions. Ritual laughter almost invariably appears during the end stage of the mortuary ritual, whether it is during the funeral itself or later celebrations to appease and send away of the spirit of the dead. The laughter thus serves as a means of healing: the mourners are healed of their grief, and the social order is restored by the final ejection of the dead. This use is of the same type as the use of

⁵⁰⁹ See Bakhtin's chapters on "The Grotesque Image of the Body and Its Sources" and "The Material Bodily Lower Stratum" in Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helene Iswolsky. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984. 303-436.

ritual laughter for expelling evil from communities (e.g., IV.2). In some cultures the dead are thought to be unable to laugh; accordingly, laughter can be deliberately evoked to magically bring about the opposites of death, mourning, and grief.⁵¹⁰

Thus, the use of ritual laughter for healing must also be part of its use for agricultural fertility, for there it not only encourages growth in the new season but also “heals” or expels the trouble from the earth – whatever had been preventing it from producing crops during the winter season. This is similar to ritual clowns’ use of obscenity to ‘heal’ one another and drive evil out of the community (IV.2). This way of understanding agricultural fertility, as the result of a sadness or illness of the earth, can also account for why infertile old women make both brides, mourners, and agricultural deities laugh, since in all these cases, laughter is meant as the agent of motion from infertility to fertility. Demeter, who is mourning and blocking the fertility of the earth, must stop this mourning to become fertile again; thus she, equally as a bride, is before-fertility, and can be balanced by the post-fertility of the old woman.⁵¹¹

⁵¹⁰ V. Propp, “Ritual Laughter in Folklore,” trans. Maxine L. Bronstein and Lee Haring, in *Theory and History of Folklore*, ed. Anatoly Liberman. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984. pp. 124-146. 128.

⁵¹¹ Douglas points out that the one who jokes at funerals in central Africa is expected to be a friend but not a kinsman. The kinsmen are ritually endangered by contact with the dead, whereas “it is the personal friend, the joking partner, who is uninvolved in the social structure and is the person who is immune from pollution of death.” Douglas, “The Social Control of Cognition,” 159. This type of analysis could also be applied to Iambe, who is immune to Demeter’s threat of non-fertility, since she is past child-bearing age, and is thus able to cure the goddess from grief.

The Function of Greek Aischrologia

Having surveyed the testimonia for *aischrologia*, the physical remains of its rituals, and the examples of similar rituals the world over, what can we now say about Greek *aischrologia*?

One important aspect of *aischrologia* pointed to by the comparisons is the importance of alcoholic beverages during humorous rituals. Wine clearly held an important place in ancient religion as a whole,⁵¹² and several sources clearly link the consumption of wine and the production of aischrologic talk, especially Plato's Spartan, in his comments of the drunken mockery "from the wagons."⁵¹³ Was there a special connection between wine and *aischrologia* like the connections between alcohol and humorous ritual in other cultures?

Greeks believed that wine intensified feelings of pleasures and pains, especially anger and lust, while also depriving the drinker, according to Plato, of "perceptions, memories, opinions, and good sense."⁵¹⁴ The Athenian Stranger in the *Laws* goes on

⁵¹² Besides those sources to be discussed here, see Plato's *Symposium* and the Aristotelian *Problems* 3 and 30. Bibliography on ancient wine is listed by P. Boyancé, "Platon et le vin," *BAGB*, 4 (1951), pp. 3-19; A. McKinlay, "Attic Temperance," *Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 12 (1951), pp. 61-102; Janine Bertier, *Mnésithée et Dieuchès*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972. 56-86; Jackie Pigeaud, *La maladie de l'ame: etude sur la relation de l'ame et du corps dans la tradition médico-philosophique antique*. Paris: Société D'Édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1981.

⁵¹³ Plato, *Laws*, 637a. The scholiast on Luc. *Jup. Trag.* 44 also explicitly says that the mockers on the wagons were drunk, as does the *Corpus Paroem. Graec.* Ed. Leutsch and Schneidewin, Göttingen 1851. Appendix IV, 80. Wine and mockery "from the wagons" are also associated in Schol. Ar. *Nub.* 297.

to claim that wine can produce terror “even the most courageous person.”⁵¹⁵ Wine has these effects because it “drives us out of our minds with the intoxication of pleasure.”⁵¹⁶

For Plato, these effects of wine gave it important uses; most importantly for us, he believed that wine put certain people into a proper state to celebrate rituals. Plato thought that wine makes drinkers cheerful, then hopeful and confident, finally leading to a stage of complete freedom of speech, when normal shame and fears of behaving wrongly are absent.⁵¹⁷ Thus, wine is

the initiation rite and play of the old, which he [Dionysos] gave to the human race as a medicine to remedy the dryness of old age, so that we might become young again, and so that through forgetfulness of despondency the hard and dry character of our soul might become softer, like iron put into fire, and so made more easy to mold.⁵¹⁸

The young have enough natural heat, but their colder elders – those over forty - must be warmed in order to properly dance and sing in celebration of Dionysos, a ritual which Plato invented to serve the purposes of his ideal state.⁵¹⁹ Plato’s ideas drew from traditional sources – Homer, too, thought that wine could make even the normally staid man

⁵¹⁴ Plato, *Laws* 1.645d6-646a2. For a discussion of Plato’s thoughts about wine, see Elizabeth Belfiore, “Wine and Catharsis of the Emotions in Plato’s *Laws*,” *Classical Quarterly*, 36.2 (1986), pp. 421-437.

⁵¹⁵ *Laws* 648a1-2. See also the comment Odysseus makes about the drunken Silenus in Euripides’ *Cyclops*: “he’s so weak he’s stuck to the winecup there, a bird in lime, his flapping all in vain.” (480).

⁵¹⁶ *Laws* 649d4-7.

⁵¹⁷ *Laws* 1.649a9-b6.

⁵¹⁸ *Laws* 2.666b5-c3, trans. 36.2 (1986), pp. 421-437. 426.

⁵¹⁹ The old dance and sing: *Laws* 2.666a2-d1. During this ritual, various age groups were supposed to form choruses in order to teach children through song about virtue and of the gods: *Laws*, 664a-b.

dance, sing, speak freely, and laugh.⁵²⁰ Plato wanted to use this state for his own purposes – hence the rationalized ritual he proposes – but it is probable that what he was actually looking at was the use of wine to encourage unrestrained behavior during *aischrologia* festivals, which were eminently concerned with the avoidance of the restraints of shame and the production of free speech and laughter.⁵²¹

The importance of wine in Greek religion is supported by anthropological studies of ritual drinking.⁵²² These studies conclude, unsurprisingly, that the consumption of

⁵²⁰ *Odyssey* 14.463-6. Also similar is Teiresias' statement, in Euripides' *Bacchae*, that though old he is not ashamed to dance, since Dionysus requires men of all ages: 204-9; and Athenaeus' retelling of the proverb that wine makes even the unwilling old man dance: 10.428a – and see also Aristophanes, *Frogs* 345. These examples are discussed in Janine Bertier, *Mnésithée et Dieuchès*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972. 79.

⁵²¹ The only occasions with rituals of *aischrologia* that are not immediately connectable to drinking are the all-female ones, since it is unclear whether or not ancient women would have been permitted to drink; still, Aristophanes imagines the Thesmophoria as an orgy of drinking, almost as if he is unable to imagine female license of speech in any other way.

⁵²² There are few such studies. The subject was of interest as early as A.W. Buckland's article "Ethnological Hints Afforded by the Stimulants in Use among Savages and among the Ancients." *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain*, 8 (1878-1879). pp. 239-254. Another early comparison of Greek and "primitive" ritual drinking is James H. Leuba, "Extatic Intoxication in Religion," *American Journal of Psychology*, 28.4 (1917), pp. 578-584. One prominent strand of research on ritual drinking is its use in the so-called "Afro-Brazilian" cults: see Seth Leacock, "Ceremonial Drinking in an Afro-Brazilian Cult," *American Anthropologist*, 66.2 (1964), pp. 344-354. Also of interest is Dwight B. Heath, "Drinking Patterns of the Bolivian Camba," *Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 19 (1958), pp. 491-508. A study of mid-20th century Greek ritual drinking is Richard H. Blum and Eva M. Blum, "Drinking Practices and Controls in Rural Greece," *British Journal of Addiction*, 60.1 (1964), pp. 93-108. The earliest comprehensive survey is Donald Horton, "The Functions of Alcohol in Primitive Societies: A Cross-cultural Study," *Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 4 (1943), pp. 199-320. Horton summarizes more than 70 reports on the use of alcohol in various cultures and concludes, unsurprisingly, that the consumption of alcohol reduces anxieties and is thus generally accompanied by a loosening of sexual and aggressive tendencies. The most sophisticated available discussions of ritual drinking are in Mary Douglas,

alcohol reduces anxieties and is thus generally accompanied by a loosening of sexual and aggressive tendencies. Researchers also note that drinkers need not be physically intoxicated to behave in a less restrained manner.⁵²³ This general pattern of the use of

ed., *Constructive Drinking: Perspectives on Drink from Anthropology*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press and Paris: Editions de la Masion des Sciences de L'Homme, 1987. The volume contains a survey by Dwight Heath of the history of ethnographic studies of alcohol use. Douglas, in her introductory essay, continues to develop the idea that drunkenness is not a mere physical state, but that it is a highly patterned and learned behavior. Though the act of drinking is, in this view, a cultural variable, with the potential to mean very different things in different cultures, Douglas concludes that anthropologists have generally found that alcohol is "a normal adjunct to celebration," with celebratory behaviors being somewhat different from everyday life, though just as strictly governed by social rules: "A Distinctive Anthropological Perspective." 4. Douglas further argues that the connection of drinking to celebration goes beyond coincidence. Rather, drinking helps to construct the world of the celebration or the ritual by acting as a cue that signals a shift between activities, groups, or spheres: "A Distinctive Anthropological Perspective." 8. Gusfield, in the same volume, expands on this idea of drinking as a ritual cue, examining the way in which after-work drinks have symbolic properties that facilitate the transition from work to leisure by means of a conventionalized relaxation of social controls over behavior. Gusfield theorizes that alcohol is able to do this because it provides a "cover," that is, it provides an excuse for unmannerly behavior – one can blame the drink, not one's own wish to indulge in less socially acceptable behavior. Joseph R. Gusfield, "Passage to Play: Rituals of Drinking Time in American Society," in Mary Douglas, ed., *Constructive Drinking: Perspectives on Drink from Anthropology*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press and Paris: Editions de la Masion des Sciences de L'Homme, 1987. 73-90. If we think of drinking according to the anthropological analysis, as a transitional cue and accompaniment to some *aischrologia* rituals, we can also understand the similar nature of all-female rituals. There, the separation from society as a whole and male society in particular acted, like drinking, as a cue for different behavior.

⁵²³ For example, Berreman noted that the Aleuts consume a weak alcoholic beverage but strongly express emotional reactions and aggressive behavior otherwise prohibited; he thinks, thus, that drinking is a ritual accompaniment of what he calls a "socially sanctioned 'moral holiday'" rather than the actual cause of this behavior. Gerald D. Berreman, "Drinking Patterns of the Aleuts," *Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 17 (1956), pp. 503-514. 508. Especially relevant to Greek behavior is Berreman's comments that "In their sober life, Aleuts display their feelings very little and are tactful and circumspect in referring to others. Drunkenness greatly weakens inhibitions in those matters, and *emotions* are openly displayed. At parties people weep, laugh, express their affections and resentments, praise and criticize others, and generally indulge in behavior and language that would otherwise be considered reprehensible." 507.

alcohol as a cue for different, more relaxed, and yet still socially controlled behavior is also true of ancient Greek culture. Not only were the insults and sexual talk of ritual *aischrologia* spurred on by drinking, but secular drinking-parties had similar effects, with wine increasing mockery and obscenity – and even parody of mythology.⁵²⁴

⁵²⁴ Some pertinent ancient sources on drinking and joking during symposium are discussed by Slater, “*Symptotic Ethics in the Odyssey*,” 214. For a general discussion of laughter during the *symposium*, see Bremmer, “Jokes, Jokers and Jokebooks.” The evidence for buffoons that practiced during *symposia* is catalogued by P. Maas, “Gelotopoioi,” in *Pauly RE*, vol. 7 (Stuttgart 1912), pp. 1019-21. *Symposia* could feature one-liners about mythology, as when, in an anecdote related in the *Deipnosophistae*, the Athenian love of eels is transformed into mock-Homeric terms with the story of the witticism of a man who, “in the company of diners, when an eel was served, cried: ‘Here comes the Helen of all feasts; I, therefore, shall be Paris.’” The eel-lover then snatched his sweetheart out of the common dish and ate it without allowing anyone else a share. *Deipnosophistae*, 298b. The *Deipnosophistae* (“Sophists at Dinner”), written by Athenaeus of Naucratis sometime in the early 3rd century CE, is itself a demonstration that the one common means of displaying one’s mythological erudition was to make jokes about myth. This is most explicit when one speaker claims that “the solution of riddles is not alien to philosophy, and the ancient used to make a display of their knowledge by means of them. For in propounding riddles in their drinking-bouts... [they] preferred such problems as these: answering the first guest who recited an epic or iambic line, each one in turn capped it with the next verse.... Similarly... they would tell the name of each leader against Troy, or of each leader among the Trojans, or tell the name of a city in Asia – all beginning with a given letter.... Thus their very play, being not unreflective, became a revelation of the friendly terms with culture on which each guest stood....” *Deipnosophistae*, 457d-f; the speaker claims that he is quoting from Clearchus’ *On Proverbs*. That such play with myth was common during *symposia* of an earlier period can be seen in Plato’s 4th century BCE *Symposium*, where the characters each tell a story about the deity Eros; that each story is different shows the acceptability of the manipulation of myth, and even, in the case of the character Aristophanes’ story, the comic manipulation of myth. Indeed, the hero of the *Wasps* admonishes his father not to tell mythological stories at the fashionable dinner-parties he is to attend, suggesting that myths were often thought of as amusing and undignified. *Wasps*, 1174-1181; see the commentary on this scene in Lowell Edmunds, “Introduction: The Practice of Greek Mythology,” in Lowell Edmunds, ed. *Approaches to Greek Mythology*. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990. pp. 1-20. 2-3. Mythological burlesques may even have taken more elaborate forms: for example, the genre called *paignia*, small amateur productions put on during parties, tended towards the licentious and scandalous and may have featured some mythological burlesque. See James Davidson, “*Gnesippus paigniagraphos*: the comic poets and the erotic mime,” in *The Rivals of Aristophanes: Studies in Athenian Old Comedy*, ed. David Harvey and John Wilkins, London:

Both the Kabirion painters and those of the Anthesteria vases have particular emphasis in their many scenes of the consumption of food and wine. The Kabirion images emphasize the mouth, anus, and fat bellies of their figures, as well as showing them eagerly feasting and drinking - even when to do so may be dangerous, as when Odysseus grabs the potion from Kirke's hands. The parody scenes also show characters behaving in strange and exaggerated ways – gods and heroes forget their roles, pay little attention to their surroundings, or become cowards.

A common strand links these behaviors – they can all be caused by drunkenness. We have already seen that the Greeks thought of wine as increasing feelings of pleasure – hence the greedy impulse to consume more food and drink. Wine also takes away one's common sense, so Odysseus can no longer be wily around Kirke when she offers him the wine he wants. The Greeks, in common with many other cultures, thought of wine as increasing sexual urges.⁵²⁵ Drinking could also dim one's perceptions – as Theseus' seem to be dimmed, since he does not notice the boar charging at him. Cowardice was also thought to be produced by wine, even in normally courageous persons – hence the fleeing heroes.

Duckworth, 2000. pp. 41-74. That there was a general tendency towards making fun of myth when drinking means that it is hardly surprising that the jokes during *aischrologia* rituals could also take this form. For more on the relation between the symposium and ritual dining, see Pauline Schmitt-Pantel, "Sacrificial Meal and *Symposion*: Two Models of Civic Institutions in the Archaic City?" in *Symptica: A Symposium on the Symposium*. Ed. Oswyn Murray. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990. pp. 14-33.

⁵²⁵ As well, the sexual obscenity of the imagery is hardly surprising, given the universal tendency for ritual humor to be obscene in nature. One can easily imagine the Kabirion images being part of some of the rituals whose songs have been quoted in a previous chapter. That *aischrologia* must have been primarily shameful is also hardly surprising, given the general tendency towards obscenity in Greek poetry and Old Comedy.

In short, the figures on these vases act as if they were drunk. The images serve to bring these gods and heroes - all mythology - under the sign of wine.⁵²⁶ The chous scene of a Herakles-satyr in search of wine is the best condensation of this idea, for here, a hero has been turned into a satyr, and his noble quest for immortality diverted into a desperate attempt to increase his drunkenness.

What function might the vase imagery have served during rituals of *aischrologia*? The obvious answer is that comic images served to increase the general hilarity of the festival, just as handling models of the genitals or eating cakes molded in their shape, as is recorded for the Halos, worked in conjunction with the shameful words uttered during that festival. Images and words led to the same goal, of creating the proper frame of mind for the worshipper.⁵²⁷ They did this by reflecting and expanding on the worshipper's

⁵²⁶ This idea also means that we do not have to account for the specific subjects of the mythological parodies by referring them to deities worshipped at the sanctuary, as Lapalus does when he claims, for instance, that Odysseus must have been worshipped as part of the Kabirion mysteries because he appears on Kabirion vases. Instead, working under a general idea, that of showing drunken mythology, painters may have been free to choose whatever myths best suited this purpose.

There is a question of why the scenes from the Kabirion are so much more numerous and explicit in their echoing of drinkers' behavior, especially with their images of raucous symposiasts. This may simply be because far more examples of Kabirion ware survive; perhaps, if the sanctuary of Dionysos in Limnai, where the Anthesteria drinkers dedicated their choes, were discovered, we would see more similarities. Another possible explanation is that Boeotian pottery tended to show more details of ritual activities in general, as is argued by Scheffer, "Boeotian Festival Scenes." For example, see the representation of a sacrifice, symposium, and dance – all seemingly stages of some ritual celebration – on the Boeotian Berlin, Antikensammlung, F1727, BA # 300333.

⁵²⁷ Scholars have long thought that the painted vases used during such symposia would have been "conversation pieces" – for serious topics. Mythological scenes on the krater – the large vessel from which the wine was served – or on the cups passed from hand to hand might have prompted discussions of their contents, especially given that the Greeks usually read aloud, and so even reading inscribed names on vases would have been a public activity. For the latest example of such interpretations, see the essays in Clemente Marconi, ed., *Greek Vases: Images and Controversies*. Boston: Brill, 2004.

activity – drinking – by showing all the world, even normally respectable gods and heroes, under the influence of wine. The worshipper was overcome and transformed with wine and thus experienced, even if only metaphorically, being overcome and transformed by the presence of the divine. Wine served as the irruption of the divine into mortal life. No wonder, then, that the parodied myths on the vases so often choose stories of mortals who encountered divinities: Odysseus, Paris, Oedipus. And no wonder, as well, that on these vases, uniquely in Greek art, satyrs and mortal men dance together. *Aischrologia* was meant to bring about this hilarious, exhilarated union.

Given the frequent connection of ritual mockery to rituals of human and agricultural fertility in other cultures, we can speculate that *aischrologia* was also linked fertility rituals.

Some scholars have already linked them - even Nietzsche compared the joy of Dionysiac ceremonies to “the potent coming of spring penetrating all nature with joy”.⁵²⁸ More orthodox classical scholars, among them Nilsson and Burkert, also have posited this connection between *aischrologia* and fertility.⁵²⁹ These connections are seldom

⁵²⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*. Trans. Clifton P. Fadiman. New York: Dover Publications, 1995. 4.

⁵²⁹ Scholars who posit fertility connections: Lewis Richard Farnell, *Cults of the Greek States*, vol. 5. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909. 197, 205; Martin P. Nilsson, *History of Greek Religion*. Trans. F. J. Fielden. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925. 306; Martin P. Nilsson, *Greek Folk Religion*. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961. 33; Arthur W. Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyramb, Tragedy and Comedy*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927. 100-101, 129, 194; George E. Mylonas, *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961. 256; Burkert, *Homo Necans*, 69-70, 70 n. 52. Burkert’s stance on the connection of *aischrologia* with fertility is somewhat vague: “Rites with sexual emphasis are generally understood in terms of fertility magic.... The Greek evidence, however, always points most conspicuously to the absurdity and

accepted, in part because modern interpretive interest focuses on social aspects of *aischrologia*, such as its importance to women's lives. The scholars who do connect *aischrologia* with fertility or healing rarely offer much in the way of argument or explanation for this theory. They simply state it, as if obvious; thus, unsurprisingly, others offer curt dismissals of fecundative theories of *aischrologia* as unacceptable "stock explanations."⁵³⁰ This antipathy to fertility explanations is also the result of the modern rejection of approaches like those of Frazer or Harrison, which simplify rituals into universal patterns and are interested in the origins of rituals rather than their historical operations. Still, to agree partially with them is not necessarily to adopt their approach or method. I have been concerned with precisely those social differences Frazer smoothed over in his search for commonalities.⁵³¹

Of course, we do not need to believe that the Greeks understand agricultural rituals as having direct or necessary causal powers, especially when the rituals are directed towards seasonal events, such as the coming of the rains, which individuals

buffoonery of the whole affair: there is a conscious descent to the lower classes and the lower parts of the anatomy...." Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 105.

⁵³⁰ The sentiment is that of Hoffman, "Ritual License and the Cult of Dionysos," 102. Another explicit rejection of these explanations is that of Halliwell, who also connects then to Frazer and 19th c. anthropology: Halliwell, "Le Rire Rituel," 157.

⁵³¹ It is more Frazer's followers than Frazer himself who took this search for primitivism to an extreme; see, for example, S.A. Hill, "Apparent Survival of a Human and the Hints given by Pairing Season," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 18 (1889), pp. 93-94: "From the existence of the *Holi* festival among the Hindus, and of similar spring festivals, accompanied with lascivious songs and dances, among many barbarous tribes, as well as from the traces of such festivals still surviving in Europe, classical writers regarding the nature of certain annual religious mysteries performed by the early Greeks and Romans, anthropologists have thought that possibly, during pre-historic times, the human species, like the lower animals in a state of nature, had an annual pairing-time." 93.

would admit will come regardless of the ritual. We can rather adopt Douglas' theory that ritual is "a focusing mechanism, a method of mnemonics and a control for experience"; that is, ritual helps the individual to adapt to life under certain social and natural conditions.⁵³² For the Greeks, laughter was a "thing to think with" – a means of addressing the vastly complicated matter of fertility.

That both mortuary and fecundative ceremonies use ritual laughter can also be understood once we conceive of the magical function of this laughter. Laughter lends its efficacy to ceremonies of the end of mourning for a deceased individual, as has been seen, by making a change in the state of those who grieve. They are brought back to normal life from a deathlike state of sadness. We have also seen that human females can also be thought of as in deathlike state before they are fertile – for example, Nkanga girls are regarded "dying" and "closed-up" during their initiation ceremonies, whose ritual

⁵³² Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concept of Pollution and Taboo*. London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2002. 78. Douglas puts the Greeks in her (non-prejudicially-named) "primitive" worldview category: see *Purity and Danger*, 72-111. This type of belief system implies a somewhat undifferentiated view of the individual in relation to the universe; that is, there will be beliefs that an individual's life is shaped by impersonal, universal forces. The primitive worldview is also anthropocentric, so that even impersonal, universal forces are also held to react to the behavior of individuals, and these forces are thought to be in some ways responsive to communications of the type that one person could hold with another. Douglas stresses that not all individuals in a culture necessarily hold these types of beliefs – philosophers and other thinkers can evolve their own views of the universe – nor are these beliefs necessarily conscious and thought-out, but are rather best described as institutions, "compounded part of belief and part of practice": *Purity and Danger*, 102-104. The anthropocentric universe is understood in terms of human behavior, and so is sometimes considered as able to understand and react to a person-to-person style of communication – to respond, just as people do, to the symbols of speech, gesture, ritual, gift, etc: *Purity and Danger*, 106.

Douglas' theories have been used profitably by classicists before: see Andrew Stewart, *Art, Desire, and the Body in Ancient Greece*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. 133.

laughter brings them into a new life as a wife who is open, able to be impregnated.⁵³³ The connection between the deathlike sadness of mourning and infertility is definite in the Demeter myth, as is the similar use of ritual laughter to “heal” both sadness and infertility. The anthropocentric worldview of the Greeks gave rise to rituals that treated the earth as if it were a female who needed to be healed from the infertile sadness of winter. And thus the jokes of the Thesmophoria, for example, did not take place merely in imitation of the story of Demeter and Iambe, but to reenact Iambe’s role – to re-cheer the earth.⁵³⁴

Douglas has tried to answer the question of why some rituals use the unclean or forbidden as something sacred and required.⁵³⁵ This question is especially interesting for those societies which, as the Greeks did, strive for purity in everyday social life.⁵³⁶ Cultures with these high levels of social control usually also set strict controls on the body; we have already discussed the Greek suspicion of laughter, which can now be seen as an avoidance of laughter’s interruption of bodily control.⁵³⁷ Of course, social rules

⁵³³ Victor Turner, *The Drums of Affliction*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968. 213.

⁵³⁴“a certain old crone, Iambe, joked (*skophasa*) the goddess and made her smile. For that reason they say that the women break jests (*skoptein*) at the Thesmophoria.” Apollodorus, 1.5.1.

⁵³⁵ Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 198-220.

⁵³⁶ As is evident from their separation of men and women, segregation of society into Greek citizens versus slaves and foreigners, emphasis on the sexual purity of women and the non-penetrability of the citizen male, and so on. On Greek xenophobia, see Isaac, *Invention of Racism*. On sexual mores, see Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*.

⁵³⁷ For the idea that social control implies bodily control, see Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, 16, 93-112. Greek distrust of laughter: Lateiner, “No Laughing Matter”; and Halliwell, “The uses of laughter,” 280. The frequent characterization by the Greeks of unwanted

cannot remove natural impulses any more than they can completely quell bodily irruptions, and so a life of strict social and sexual purity is uncomfortable, and, for a society, impossible, since it would logically lead to rejection of sex, and thus reproduction, altogether.⁵³⁸ Douglas thus proposes that societies with strict purity rules integrate natural urges towards “impure” objects or activities into life by ritualizing them, containing and controlling them within a ritual frame. Indeed, it is often in the societies whose behaviors are the most normally strictly controlled that the most notable examples of ritual license appear (Pueblo Indians, the indigenous peoples of Central America, Indian caste-based cultures, etc.). Not only do these events provide a ritualized outlet for the expression of sexual urges and freedom of language and association, but they also, by a type of cultural economy, serve as magic as well. That is, impure objects or activities, once placed into a ritual frame, become sources of power.⁵³⁹

Hence, the use in *aischrologia* rituals of normally abominable objects or acts such as the exposure of the female genitals. Forbidden in normal life, the exposure of female genitals would have had much power when used ritually.⁵⁴⁰ We should accordingly

behaviors as “animal” is common to strictly regulated societies: “A complex social system devises for itself ways of behaving that suggest that human intercourse is disembodied compared with that of animal creation.” Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, 101.

⁵³⁸ Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 200.

⁵³⁹ Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 204.

⁵⁴⁰ Male nudity was common in ancient Greece, especially at the palestra, but respectable females would not have been nude in public and rarely in private. They especially would have kept their genitals covered – a rule consistent with Greek society’s attempts to insure the purity of citizen females.

understand the sexuality of *aischrologia* not as a commentary on social facts, but as an efficacious part of the ritual.⁵⁴¹

There are other instances of connections between fertility and laughter in Greek culture besides those latent in *aischrologia*. For instance, the myth explaining why Hera was worshipped as “the marrying one” - the patron of marriage – is a myth about a deception by Zeus, Hera’s anger and subsequent happy laughter.⁵⁴² The Utopias found in Greek comic literature often feature both sexual freedom and effortless agricultural fertility.⁵⁴³

⁵⁴¹ The importance of sexuality can also be stressed by its temporary abeyance, since some Greek women’s festivals stressed continence and separation from males during the period of the festival. This temporary chastity could have been intended as an antithetical preparation for fertility, as Burkert argues: Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 244. Versnel also admits this possibility: H. S. Versnel, *Inconsistencies in Greek and Roman Religion*, Vol. 2. Leiden and New York: Brill, 1990. 287.

Sources mention other instances of the power of exposed female genitals: the Lycian women drive away Bellerophon by exposing themselves, and Plutarch wrote that Persian women expose themselves to send their army out to fight: *Virtues of Women*, 9.248b and 5.246a. I have already discussed comparative examples of the power of exposed genitals in cultures which normally forbid such exposure: the prevalent play with genitals during the healing and cathartic ritual drama of the Zinacanteco Indians, for example (IV.2).

⁵⁴² This myth, that of the Boeotian *Daidala*, is recounted by Plutarch, *FrGrHist* 388 F I (Hera experience joy and laughter) and Pausanias 9.2.7-9.3.3 (Hera is pleased at the deception, but is not said to laugh). On this festival, see Chaniotis, “Ritual Dynamics.”

⁵⁴³ On these utopias, see Marcella Farioli, *Mundus alter: Utopie e distopie nella commedia greca antica*. Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2001. esp. 197-208, on the gastronomic themes in Utopias, 208-214, on the erotic theme, and 27-137, on the themes of the “land of Cockaigne.” Comedies with this theme are given in Athenaeus, 6: Cratines’ *Plutus* and *Animals*, for example. On Greek Utopias, see also C. Bonner, “Dionysiac Magic and the Greek Land of Cockaigne,” *Transactions and. Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 41 (1910), pp. 175-179; H.C. Baldry, “The idler’s paradise in Attic Comedy,” *Greece and Rome* 22 (1953), pp. 49-60; John Ferguson, *Utopias of the Classical World*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1975; Ian Ruffell, “The World Turned Upside Down: Utopia and Utopianism in the Fragments of Old Comedy,” in *The*

Demeter, whose mythology and cult are clearly connected with both human and agricultural fertility, is a natural deity to be worshipped with ritual laughter, but she is not the only deity so honored by the Greeks.⁵⁴⁴ Dionysos was also worshipped in this way, though he is not at first so likely a candidate for *aischrologia*. A closer look shows some agricultural connections. The Anthesteria, an important focus for ritual laughter in Dionysos' cult, can be understood as a fertility festival, since it both takes place in the spring and celebrates the products of the previous fall's vintage.⁵⁴⁵ Dionysos seems to have been worshipped alongside Demeter in some sanctuaries, such as the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Corinth.⁵⁴⁶ Ure has even proposed that there was a special agricultural Dionysos, connected to Demeter's cult, who perhaps had special jurisdiction over the threshing floor, where his grapes were also dried.⁵⁴⁷ Ure also pointed out that the

Rivals of Aristophanes: Studies in Athenian Old Comedy, ed. Davis Harvey and John Wilkins. London: Duckworth, 2000. pp. 473-526.

⁵⁴⁴ For a survey, see A.C. Brumfield, *The Attic Festivals of Demeter and their Relation to the Agricultural Year*. New York: Arno Press, 1981.

⁵⁴⁵ The Anthesteria took place during the month Anthesterion, which corresponds to roughly February-March. The names of the festival and the month are both based on the Greek *anthos* – a flower, a sprout or bloom. The connection between the Anthesteria and fertility rites has been made before, though more as a statement than an argument: Hans Herter, *Vom dionysischen Tanz zum komischen Spiel*. Iserlohn: Silva-Verlag, 1947. 21, 30-31.

⁵⁴⁶ Advocates of Dionysos' worship here include Ure, "Demeter and Dionysos on Acrocorinth"; and Bookidis and Fisher, "Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore on Acrocorinth: Preliminary Report V," 290-291. For a connection of Dionysos and Demeter in literature, see Euripides, *Bach*. 274ff. Bremmer has also written that "[b]oth Dionysos and Demeter were gods closely associated with reversals of the social order and both occupied an 'eccentric' position in the Greek pantheon." Bremmer, "Jokes, Jokers and Jokebooks," 13; see also Jan N. Bremmer, *Greek Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994. 18-20.

liknon, the Greek basket-shaped winnowing-fan, was associated with the cult of Dionysos since at least the second half of 5th century BCE.⁵⁴⁸ Of course, Dionysos might also have been assimilated into rituals of *aischrologia* because his gift to mankind – wine – was so important in helping celebrants to achieve these rituals.

Whatever the explanation for the particular deities worshipped with *aischrologia*, it is clear that its jokes, even those which mock at the gods, are not products of disbelief.⁵⁴⁹

What, then, of the place of *aischrologia* in non-agricultural ceremonies - most notably, during the Eleusinian mysteries? Douglas has also proposed a structural use of jokes in mystery rituals. The mysteries in any religion are supposed not only to be secret but to be in some way beyond the ability of human thought to conceive, and so Douglas suggests that jokes, which both reveal how provisional and arbitrary the patterns of human thought are and hint at other ways of structuring reality, are fit accompaniments to mystery rites.⁵⁵⁰ This explanation could suffice, or we could also think of the mysteries themselves as somehow linked with agricultural fertility. The most famous of the mysteries, those of Eleusis, were after all in honor of Demeter and Kore, and had to do with the sending forth of Triptolemos to the world as a sower of grain. The mysteries

⁵⁴⁷ A. D. Ure, "The God with the Winnowing-Fan," *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 72 (1952), p. 121; for the threshing-floor as a site for drying grapes, see A. D. Ure, "Threshing-Floor or Vineyard," *The Classical Quarterly*, 5.3/4 (1955), pp. 225-230.

⁵⁴⁸ Ure, "God with the Winnowing-Fan."

⁵⁴⁹ The sort of comic statements or hints that might be produced by a Greek who began to doubt his myths but still worked within a ritual system are explored in Helene P. Foley, *Ritual Irony: Poetry and Sacrifice in Euripides*. Ithaca, N.Y. and London: Cornell University Press, 1985.

⁵⁵⁰ Douglas, "The Social Control of Cognition," 160.

celebrated at the sanctuary of the Kabiroi at Samothrace may also have been related to fertility, since some ancient sources suggest that phallic imagery was important to the Samothracian cult.⁵⁵¹ Herodotus records that its initiated worshipped ithyphallic images.⁵⁵² Burkert thinks that the reason for this worship is hinted at in Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*, where Hermes is described, "whose nature was aroused in a rather obscene way, tradition says, because he was moved by the sight of Proserpina [Kore]." ⁵⁵³ This brings us back to Demeter, Kore, and agricultural fertility.

We do not know at what time of the year the Kabirion sanctuary in Boeotia held its festivals, and so cannot be certain if its *aischrologia* were more related to spring agricultural celebration or to its mystery rites. Demand has suggested that the cult here might have been related to fertility because of the vase images showing processions

⁵⁵¹ On the problem of making sense of this cult, see Walter Burkert, "Concordia Discors: the literary and the archeological evidence on the sanctuary of Samothrace," in *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches*. Ed. Nanno Marinatos and Robin Hägg. London and New York: Routledge, 1995. pp. 178-191.

⁵⁵² "The production of these [ithyphallic images of Hermes] came from the Pelasgians, from whom the Athenians were the first Greeks to take it, and then handed it on to others. For the Athenians were then already counted as Greeks when the Pelasgians came to live in the land with them and thereby began to be considered as Greeks. Whoever has been initiated into the rites of the Kabiroi, which the Samothracians learned from the Pelasgians and now practice, understands what my meaning is. Samothrace was formerly inhabited by those Pelasgians who came to live among the Athenians, and it is from them that the Samothracians take their rites. The Athenians, then, were the first Greeks to make ithyphallic images of Hermes, and they did this because the Pelasgians taught them. The Pelasgians told a certain sacred tale about this, which is set forth in the Samothracian mysteries." Herodotus, 2.51.1. No phallic or sexual imagery has so far been found in the excavations at Samothrace.

⁵⁵³ Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* 3.56. On this passage, see Burkert, "Concordia Discors," 181-183.

approaching an ithyphallic herm as well as the ithyphallic Silenoi figurines found among votive offerings.⁵⁵⁴

Halliwell, rejecting the notion of Greek ritual laughter as fecundative, held that what this explanation lacked was an ability to account for the social functions of ritual laughter and place these rituals within the general culture.⁵⁵⁵ Douglas' theory of ritual joking allows us to understand not only the magical but also the social function of *aischrologia* rituals. She proposed that ritual joking can encourage ordinarily submerged, unappreciated, or even forbidden levels of social relations by devaluing normal social structure.⁵⁵⁶ And indeed, some *aischrologia* rituals were occasions for unusual social relations, such as the procession to Eleusis, during which every member of a usually hierarchically stratified society was theoretically free to mingle, or the women's festivals, during which women normally allowed only limited trips outside of their homes could congregate and renew friendships.

And, as has already been proposed for the ritual license of the Pueblo Indians and Indian caste societies, the temporary escape from social structure offered by Greek rituals serves to reinforce the belief in its necessity.⁵⁵⁷ This return to order is understood by some cultures as a purification from or exorcism of evil, as when old pots are broken at the end of *Holi*, or the evil Bull is ritually sacrificed at the end of the season of ritual

⁵⁵⁴ Nancy H. Demand, *Thebes in the Fifth Century: Heracles Resurgent*. London: Routledge, 1982. 66.

⁵⁵⁵ Halliwell, "Le Rire Rituel."

⁵⁵⁶ Douglas, "The Social Control of Cognition," 156.

⁵⁵⁷ This is the thesis of Versnel, *Inconsistencies in Greek and Roman Religion*, 116-117.

humor of the Zinacanteco Indians, or the crowd is purified by Kachinas while the clowns are whipped among the Pueblo Indians. It is reasonable that rituals which take hold of the power of normally unclean objects or acts should need to be followed by such purifications.⁵⁵⁸ Perhaps Aristotle was indicating a similar set of beliefs when he wrote about the cathartic effect of Tragedy, which, too, manipulated normally abominable things within a type of ritual frame.⁵⁵⁹

⁵⁵⁸ Compare also the ancient medical belief that drunkenness (such as that experienced during festivals of *aischrologia*) could lead to “*katharsis* of the body and relaxation of the soul.” Mnesitheus, fr. 45 = Athen., 11.484a; see also Mnesitheus, fr. 41 and 42 = Athen., 2.36a ff. and 1.22e.

⁵⁵⁹ Some notable discussions of *katharsis* include: C.B. Daniels and S. Scully, “Pity, Fear, and Catharsis in Aristotle’s Poetics,” *Nous* 26 (1992), pp. 204-217; Charles Segal, “Catharsis, Audience, and Closure in Greek Tragedy,” in *Tragedy and the Tragic: Greek Theatre and Beyond*, ed. M.S. Silk. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. pp. 149-181; Fortunat Hoessly, *Katharsis: Reinigung als Heilverfahren Studien zum Ritual der archaischen und klassischen Zeit sowie zum Corpus Hippocraticum*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001; Stephen Halliwell, “La psychologie morale de la catharsis. Un essai de reconstruction,” *Les Études Philosophiques*, 4 (2003), pp. 499-517.

The German ethnologist Hans Fischer describes his arrival among the Watut of Papua New Guinea in the late 1950s: “I shook hands, laughed as much as I could and did not understand a word they said.”⁵⁶⁰

Conclusion

This dissertation has examined *aischrologia* and reinterpreted it using comparative anthropology, allowing a better understanding of the vases which are ritual laughter’s physical remains.

I began by addressing the general problem of identifying ancient visual humor, proposing several tests: the universality of a comic motif across many cultures; the likelihood of a visual motif being treated as comic in Greek literary or other non-visual sources; and the presence of such techniques of visual humor as location, drawing style, body types and movements, subject-matter, and incongruity. These tests were used to identify the humor of some Attic scenes of dicing warriors, the recovery of Helen, and certain images of gods in amorous pursuit of mortals, especially Eos, Nike, and Hermes. The majority of these scenes are not drawn in a caricature style, making their identification as humorous difficult.

The remainder of the dissertation focused on several groups of vases with a more obviously humorous drawing style: Kabirion ware, Anthesteria choes, and Sam Wide Group cups. The problem here was not so much to identify the humor as it was to understand its use, since these images were associated with sanctuaries and must have had some religious use.

⁵⁶⁰ Nigel Barley, *The Innocent Anthropologist: Notes from a Mud Hut*. London: British Museum Publications, 1983.

My discussion focused on the images on these vases which parodied gods and heroes, since this type of mockery is the most difficult to fit within our conception of Greek religion. The Kabirion vases feature definite parodic images of Acheloos, the Chimera, Chiron and Achilles, Herakles, the Ilioupersis, the Judgment of Paris, Kadmos, Kephalos, Odysseus and Kirke, as well as a probable parodic image of Theseus. The Anthesteria choes parody Odysseus and the Sphinx, as do the Same Wide Group cups, along with other, less certainly identifiable, mythological figures. These images both used pre-existing Attic comic imagery as well as employing comedic techniques of a loose drawing style, a grotesque depiction of bodies, contrasts of size, giving of improper accessories or settings to the mythological characters, and making these characters forget their proper mythological narrative out of seeming stupidity or because of irresistible lust or thirst for drink.

I then showed that each of the three types of vases were associated with sanctuaries for which there is evidence of a type of religious ritual known as *aischrologia* – ritual mockery. The Greeks practiced *aischrologia* during certain festivals, mainly in honor of Dionysos and Demeter. The ancient sources describe people mocking others during festivals. The mockers could be the whole group of celebrants, a certain sub-group, or even a single person. The celebrants could mock each other, men could mock women and vice versa, or only well-known celebrants could be the object of mockery.

Since the sources do not reveal much about the actual contents of *aischrologia* – some through religious piety, some because of an assumption of its obviousness – we do not know much about the specifics of these rituals. I thus compared the ancient rituals with other rituals involving laughter or mockery studied by anthropologists, and found

that these tend to use sexual humor in rituals of human or agricultural fertility or when “healing” mourners of their sadness at the end of funerary ceremonies. Especially given that the Greeks used *aischrologia* in ceremonies of Demeter and Dionysos in his role as agricultural wine god, I posited that Greek ritual mockery had similar ritual functions.

Thus, I argued that the vases were a visual component to spoken *aischrologia*, especially since they contained wine and have images referring to wine drinking or to the effects of drunkenness. Both the vases’ images and contents served to increase the participation of the celebrant in the *aischrologia* rituals.

This function is certainly not the function of all ancient visual humor. Only a small sub-set of comic images were found in sanctuaries. There thus remain many areas of ancient visual humor to explore. I believe that many examples of visual humor remain unidentified. The history of scholarship has been to assume that all Greek vases are serious unless proven otherwise. We will probably discover more humorous images if we purposefully look for them. Then we could begin to appreciate the many functions that visual humor must have served in the ancient world. This dissertation is only one way of beginning that project.

Appendix 1: Catalogue of Mythological Parodies on Kabirion Ware

All Kabirion scenes that have been mentioned by scholars as possible mythological burlesques will be discussed in this catalogue, even if fragmentary or ultimately unidentifiable, with the exception of scenes of satyrs and maenads. A number of these are from the Kabirion, but, aside from a fondness for showing satyrs and mortals dancing together, they are unexceptional and rather unoriginal. The entries will be ordered alphabetically, with definitely identifiable mythological scenes first, then tentatively identifiable examples, including those which will be ultimately argued not to be mythological. The examples discussed in the body of the text are also included here, with some overlap in the illustrations and discussion. The last entry, on “The Arms of Achilles,” is a Kabirion vase which has been thought to show grotesque style, but which will be argued to be merely clumsy in execution.

Each entry begins with a list of the Kabirion examples of the scene in question, followed by a description and then a list of other relevant Boeotian pottery. A discussion follows, whose goals are to compare the Kabirion scene with Attic and South Italian versions of the same scene and then to analyze the specific ways in which the Kabirion painters burlesque the myths.

All vases are identified by the number assigned in Braun’s catalogue. The complete bibliography for each vase, including its numbering in Wolters and Bruns’ catalogue, if any, is noted in footnotes to the first sentences of the descriptions. This numbering indicates the painter to whom Wolters and Bruns assigned the vase: K = Kabirion Painter, M = Mystes Painter, S = Satyr Painter.

Catalogue: Entries

I. Identifiable Myths

1. Acheloos
2. Chimera
3. Chiron receives Achilles
4. Herakles and the Erymanthian Boar
5. Ilioupersis
6. Judgment of Paris
7. Kadmos
8. Kephalos
9. Odysseus and Kirke
10. Odysseus Traveling
11. Pygmies and Cranes
12. Theseus and Sow

II. Unidentifiable or Non-mythological Scenes

13. Chained Men
14. Deity(?) on Horseback
15. Fight Before a Gate
16. Herakles(?) Reclining
17. Men in a Boat
18. Ogress
19. Phallos Bird
20. Prometheus(?)
21. Zeus(?)

III. Non-grotesque Mythological Scene

22. Arms of Achilles

Chimera

There is one, somewhat fragmentary Kabirion vase with a burlesque scene of Bellerophon, Pegasus, and the Chimaira:

no. 324 (Athens, Nat. Mus., 10530). c. 425-400 BCE (fig. 8.2.1)

Description:

Two fragments survive from the Bellerophon side of the vase.⁵⁶¹ On one, there is a winged horse, shown in non-grotesque style, with open mouth and rearing front legs. To its right, a male figure with a grotesque body (short, bandy limbs, large torso, stooped posture, dangling phallos) advances; he holds an object in his right hand, which extends backwards towards the horse. On the other fragment there is a non-grotesque Chimera, with a forward-facing goat's head emerging from a lion's body (the tail does not appear to be particularly snake-like). From the association of a Chimera with a winged horse, it is clear that the scene is that of Bellerophon, dismounted from Pegasus, approaching the Chimera. Reverse: pygmies and cranes (see section on "Pygmies and Cranes" for discussion.)

Other relevant Boeotian vases:

⁵⁶¹ Bibliography: *KH I M* 29; H. Winnefeld, "Das Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben, III, Die Vasenfunde," *AM*, 13 (1888), pp. 412-428. 421-422; Ettore Romagnoli, "Ninfe e Cabiri," *Ausonia*, 2 (1907), pp. 141-184. on Kabirion ware, see pp. 159-163. 160-162; Étienne Lapalus, "Sure le sens des parodies de thèmes héroïques dans la peinture des vases du Cabirion Thébain," *RA*, 5th series, 32, (1930), pp. 65-88. 78-82; Alexandre G. Mitchell. *Comic Pictures in Greek Vase-Painting: Humour in the Polis and the Dionysian World, in the Sixth and the Fifth Centuries B.C.* Thesis for D.Phil, School of Archeology, Oxford. Trinity Term, 2002. 166.

Another Kabirion vase shows what appears to be a winged horse:
no. 414 (Thebes, Archeological Mus., ΘΠ701).⁵⁶² (fig. 8.2.2)

There is also a surviving Boeotian representation from the end of 5th c. BCE of Bellerophon mounted on Pegasos, in a serious style, a copy after the Attic iconography: Athens, National Museum, 12487 (fig. 8.2.3)

Discussion:

The Kabirion scene is similar to the Attic iconography of the attack on the Chimera.⁵⁶³ The first images of Bellerophon combating the Chimera with the aid of Pegasos are found early in the 7th c. BCE. At first, Pegasos runs along the ground, but from the mid 7th c. BCE, he is shown in flight. In both Attic and South Italian examples, the Chimera equally often faces Bellerophon as he turns away. There are several

⁵⁶² Bibliography: *KHI*, S7; *The Thespian Polyandria* (1977) 113-114.

⁵⁶³ Bibliography on the Attic iconography of Bellerophon and the Chimera: *LIMC*, s.v. "Chimera" and "Pegasos"; E. Bethe, *RE* III 2 (1899) 2281-2282 s.v. "Chimaira 3"; E. Bethe, *RE* III 1 (1897) 241-251, s.v. "Bellerophon"; R. Engelmann, *ML* I (1884-96) 893-895 s.v. "Chimaira I"; A. Rapp, *ML* I (1884-86) 757-774, s.v. "Bellerophon"; H. von Geisau, *KIPauly* I (1964) 1147 s.v. "Chimaira"; L. Malten, "Bellerophontes," *JdI*, 40 (1925), pp. 121-160; Anne Roes, "The Representation of the Chimaera," *JHS*, 54.1 (1934), pp. 21-25; Frank Brommer, *Bellerophon. Marburger Winckelmann-Programm*. Marburg: Lahn, 1952-54; T.J. Dunbabin, "Bellerophon, Herakles and Chimaera," in *Studies Presented to D.M. Robinson*, ed. George E Mylonas, vol. II. Saint Louis, Washington University, 1953. pp. 1164-1184; Anne Roes, "The Origin of the Chimaera" in *Studies Presented to D.M. Robinson*, ed. George E Mylonas, vol. II. Saint Louis, Washington University, 1953. pp. 1155-1166; Marilyn Low Schmitt, "Bellerophon and the Chimaera in Archaic Greek Art," *AJA*, 70.4 (1966), pp. 341-347.

contemporary Bellerophon scenes in the Louvre (last quarter of 5th c. BCE).⁵⁶⁴ (fig. 8.2.4)

Bellerophon is especially popular on South Italian vases, though most are later in date than the Kabirion vase; these share the same iconography as the Attic examples, for example, a Lucanian krater, c. 370 BCE, in Palermo.⁵⁶⁵ (fig. 8.2.5) On the Kabirion vase, Bellerophon has dismounted from Pegasus. Representations of Bellerophon on foot are somewhat rare: besides the Kabirion example, there is a Laconian cup from the 6th c. BCE, a bronze buckler from Olympian from the same period, and three South Italian vases.⁵⁶⁶ (fig. 8.2.6)

Previous scholars, when commenting on the burlesque nature of the Kabirion scene, have insisted that it shows a terrified and reluctant Pegasus, dragged by the reins towards the Chimera by Bellerophon. There are two problems with this interpretation. First is the reading of Pegasus' emotional state. The winged horse of the other Kabirion vase demonstrates that here, as indeed in the Greek iconography of horses in general, rearing front legs indicate eager forward motion, not hesitation. (fig. 8.2.4) Second is the problem of determining what, exactly, Bellerophon is holding. There is a line which seems to represent the reins falling from Pegasus' muzzle, but this line is drawn towards Bellerophon's waist. What he holds in his rear hand is another, straight and stiff object,

⁵⁶⁴ Paris, Musée du Louvre, G446, BA # 6004 and Paris, Musée du Louvre, G447, BA # 6005.

⁵⁶⁵ Palermo, Mus. Reg., 1014. For the South Italian Bellerophon, see K. Schauenburg, "Bellerophon in der unteritalischen Vasenmalerei," *JdI*, 71, (1956), pp. 59-96.

⁵⁶⁶ Laconian cup: Malibu (CA), The J. Paul Getty Museum, 85.AE.121. Buckler: Olympia, Mus., B231. South Italian: an Apulian krater, c. 360 BCE, Basel, Coll. Cahn, HC265; an Apulian volute-krater, c. 340 BCE, Berlin, Staatl. Mus. F3258; and a Campanian hydria, c. 350-320 BCE, Naples, private coll., 503 (*LIMC*, s.v. "Pegasos," 226).

not the reins. By analogy to the Attic iconography, it would seem that this object is another pitch-covered pole or club – Bellerophon is intent upon its use, not Pegasus. Thus Pegasus was drawn and characterized in the same non-grotesque manner as the Chimera; it is Bellerophon who is the sole grotesque member of the ensemble. The joke of his grotesqueness is thus emphasized, by contrast, especially the contrast of size – for how is Pegasus to carry him, and what hope does the Chimera have against such a monstrous brute? That he has dismounted is probably another deliberate comic change, in order to show Bellerophon as dim-wittedly disregarding the powerful assistance offered by his Pegasos.

One more Attic vase should here be discussed. This is an askos, c. 475-425 BCE, now in Hamburg, with representation of Pegasos on one side and a dwarf-like figure on the other, holding a rock in one hand and a bow in the other.⁵⁶⁷ (fig. 8.2.7) The Beazley Archive describes this figure as a “dwarf or pygmy,” and *LIMC* as a satyr.⁵⁶⁸ A comparison with the Kabirion would suggest, instead, that this is Bellerophon himself, caricatured, as the heroes are caricatured in the Kabirion ware, as a dwarf.

⁵⁶⁷ Hamburg, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, 1984.457, BA # 46028.

⁵⁶⁸ BA: 46028; *LIMC*, s.v. “Pegasos,” 18.

Chiron Receives Achilles

There is one Kabirion vase which has been interpreted as Achilles presented to Chiron:

no. 399 (London, BM, B77), c. 450-430 BCE. (fig. 8.3.1)

Description:

The scene, on one side of the vase, is composed of three figures.⁵⁶⁹ To the left, a grotesque centaur (undersized horse-body, puny limbs, oversized head, large mouth and eyes) holding a leafy branch over his shoulder and a staff in his other hand. He converses with the central figure, an extremely grotesque draped man (puny limbs, oversized head, large mouth and eyes, animal-like mouth and hair), who also holds a staff. At the far right there stands a slightly grotesque draped male figure (small limbs, somewhat oversized head) who holds a long, thin staff. The characters in this scene have always been identified by scholars as the centaur Chiron being entrusted with Achilles, the figure on the far right, by Peleus, the central figure. Reverse: grotesque man chasing a bird (see section on “Pygmies and Cranes” for discussion).

⁵⁶⁹ Bibliography: *KH* I, M 17; Paul V.C. Baur, *Centaurs in Ancient Art: The Archaic Period*. Berlin: K. Curtius, 1912. 61 no. 167; K. Friis Johansen, “Achill bei Chiron,” in *Dragma*, Martino P. Nilsson. Lund: H. Ohlsson, 1939. pp. 181-205. 204-205; Birgitt Schiffler, *Die Typologie des Kentauren in der antiken Kunst: vom 10. bis zum Ende d. 4. Jhs. v. Chr.* Frankfurt and Bern: Lang, 1976. 276 no. B6; T. B. L. Webster. *Monuments Illustrating Old and Middle Comedy*. London: Institute of Classical Studies, 1978. 19; Alexandre G. Mitchell. *Comic Pictures in Greek Vase-Painting: Humour in the Polis and the Dionysian World, in the Sixth and the Fifth Centuries B.C.* Thesis for D.Phil, School of Archeology, Oxford. Trinity Term, 2002. 169-170.

Webster categorized the heads of its figures according to mask-type: that of Chiron is his Mask E, with scanty white hair, a short beard, and a short nose; that of Peleus his Mask Z, which is clean shaven, with short hair and raised brows; that of Achilles his Mask B, with a good head of hair, short beard, and an open trumpet mouth.⁵⁷⁰ (fig. 8.3.2) Though the general outlines of the features are similar, the Kabirion painters do not seem to have any intentions of rendering exact copies, if indeed they were taking theatrical masks as their models.

Discussion:

Aside from some variance in the age of Achilles, the Attic iconography for this meeting of Peleus and Chiron does not much change from its inception to its last surviving use.⁵⁷¹ (fig. 8.3.3-7) Chiron stands to one side, most usually with a branch over his shoulder. He faces Peleus, who is sometimes costumed as a traveler and sometimes like an Athenian citizen. Achilles is always between them, whether held in one or the other's arms or, as on the stamnos in Paris, c. 490 BCE, walking towards Chiron. (fig. 8.3.4) The central figure in the Kabirion scene has usually, because of his greater size, been identified as Peleus, but a comparison with the Bellerophon burlesque scene shows

⁵⁷⁰ T. B. L. Webster. *Monuments Illustrating Old and Middle Comedy*. London: Institute of Classical Studies, 1978. 19.

⁵⁷¹ Bibliography on Attic iconography of Chiron and Peleus: *LIMC*, s.v. "Cheiron" and s.v. "Achilleus," 19-20, 22-27, 32-36, 38-39; J. Escher, *RE* III 2 (1890) 2302-2308, s.v. "Chiron"; Paul V.C. Baur, *Centaur in Ancient Art: The Archaic Period*. Berlin: K. Curtius, 1912; Birgitt Schiffler, *Die Typologie des Kentauren in der antiken Kunst: vom 10. bis zum Ende d. 4. Jhs. v. Chr.* Frankfurt and Bern: Lang, 1976. Examples: Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, STG160, BA # 320079; Paris, Musée du Louvre, G3, BA # 200435; Paris, Musée du Louvre, G186, BA # 201959; Copenhagen, National Museum, 6328, BA # 202561.

that the Kabirion painters used size to indicate a leading role, so perhaps this central figure is actually Achilles. This would accord with the invariant central placement of Achilles in the Attic scenes. In either case, whether the central or the right-hand figure, the Achilles here has been advanced in age by the painter; surely the joke is that he should no longer have need of a tutor. The other major change was to give Chiron a walking-stick; this was rather an inspired idea, as this civilized stick contradicts his usual accessory, the uncivilized branch over his shoulder, and makes clear his uncomfortable position between two worlds.

By good fortune, there has survived an Apulian phylax vase which also represents a comic Chiron, dated 380-370 BCE.⁵⁷² (fig. 8.3.8) A glance is enough to show the many differences between the comic styles of such vases and those from the Kabirion. Here, there is no reference to vase-painting iconography; indeed, we would not know Chiron if he were not labeled as such. The moment shown has an air of slap-stick – the reluctant journey of an old creature – but has nothing to do with the main narrative points of the myth. The Kabirion scene, by contrast, scores its comic points by ringing changes on tradition of the representation of this scene in Attic vase-painting; thus we again see the importance of this tradition to the Kabirion painters, whatever may have been their exposure to comic theatrical performances.

⁵⁷² London, British Museum, F151.

Herakles and the Erymanthian Boar

There is one Kabirion vase which arguably represents a burlesque version of the hunt for the Erymanthian Boar:

no. 407 (New York, MM 37.11.2) (fig. 8.4.1)

Description:

At the far left, under the handle, a crane with spread wings, holding a snake in its beak.⁵⁷³ The next figure is a grotesque male (puny limbs, oversized, heavy torso, dangling phallos), holding an unusually large club, whose head he rests on the ground. In front of him, with all legs off the ground, is a boar. From it flees another, shorter grotesque male figure (puny limbs, heavy hips, dangling phallos). At the far right, under the other handle, a large hare stands on its hind legs. Reverse: unpainted.

Discussion:

Though there are some representations of Herakles overcoming the boar, in the Attic iconography, the scene of its delivery to Eurystheus is the favored iconography.⁵⁷⁴ From the archaic period, two schemas of the delivery develop. In both of these, Eurystheus hides in or prepares to hide in a large pithos, buried in the ground, while Herakles either moves towards this pithos or stands before it, setting his leg on its edge,

⁵⁷³ Bibliography: Christine Alexander, "A Boeotian Cup and a Hellenistic Bronze," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, 32.4 (1937), pp. 90-91.

⁵⁷⁴ For Attic representations of this scene, see *LIMC*, s.v. "Herakles", 2093-2173.

threatening to let the boar slip into the pithos.⁵⁷⁵ (fig. 8.4.2) Herakles almost always carries the boar on his shoulder, though at times he trundles it by its hind legs. One surviving Attic example, a black-figure neck-amphora from c. 510 BCE, is similar to the Kabirion example in that it shows Eurystheus not yet secured in his pithos.⁵⁷⁶ (fig. 8.4.3) The existence of this variant, though earlier than the Kabirion scene, may indicate that the Kabirion painters could have seen Attic models with a running Eurystheus rather than making this change themselves. What has been changed, if this is indeed a scene of the Erymanthian Boar, is the removal of Eurystheus' hiding place and the releasing of the boar. Both these accord with the Kabirion painters' preference for lively scenes, while also giving a better opportunity to show off caricatured bodies. The boar is smaller than the one Herakles usually handles in the Attic iconography; perhaps this is meant to show even more Eurystheus' cowardice, afraid even of small wild animals.⁵⁷⁷ Its position, flying through the air, perhaps shows that Herakles has just thrown it off of his shoulder. Another small change makes a good joke, as well, for the Kabirion painter has shown Herakles leaning on his club, underlining his refusal to help his cousin.

Alexander suggested that the flanking hare and crane perhaps represented a dual chorus to what she thought was a theatrical scene.⁵⁷⁸ This would be unprecedented in either Kabirion, Attic, or South Italian vase-painting, which show choruses (when

⁵⁷⁵ London, British Museum, E44, BA # 203219.

⁵⁷⁶ Syracuse, Mus. Reg., 21965, BA # 302213.

⁵⁷⁷ A deliberate reduction in size to make a visual joke is also found on the Bellerophon and Pegasus scene. The boar is shown to be such from its scruff and genitals, and so should not be thought of as an immature animal; if it did not have these signs of adulthood, it might be taken for a piglet, which animal is sacrificed to Demeter.

⁵⁷⁸ Christine Alexander, "A Boeotian Cup and a Hellenistic Bronze," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, 32.4 (1937), pp. 90-91. 91.

identifiable) as men dressed as something, rather than as the somethings themselves. It seems that these animals will have to remain unidentified.

Ilioupersis

There is one Kabirion vase has a burlesque *Ilioupersis* scene:

no. 390 (Kassel, Staatliche Kunstslg, Leihgabe Slg. Ludwig, Aachen), c. 420 BCE. (fig. 8.5.1)

Description:

The scene has four figures under the usual grape vine border.⁵⁷⁹ On the left, a woman has fallen on her knees before a herm, elevated on a stepped platform. She looks back and stretches out a supplicating hand towards a somewhat grotesque male figure (un-muscled body, wispy beard, erection) who wears a helmet and wields a sword. The right-hand couple is composed of a fleeing woman, also with a turned-back head, whose hand meets the hand of another naked warrior; he, too, is equipped with a helmet and a sword, and is somewhat grotesque (thin limbs, dangling phallos). On the far right, another, smaller herm. The couples are evidently Ajax assaulting Kassandra and Menelaos recovering Helen. Reverse: a scene with prisoners, to be discussed in the section of “Chained Men.”)

⁵⁷⁹ Bibliography: *LIMC*, “Helene,” 290; Ars Antiqua AG Luzern, Auction IV, 7 Dec. 1962, nr. 139, pl. 49 (K. Schauenbug); A. Seeberg, “A Boston Fragment with a Prisoner,” *BICS*, 14 (1967), pp. 25-35. 28-29; Reinhard Lullies, *Aachener Kunstblätter*, 37 (1968) = *Griechische Kunstwerke Sammlung Ludwig, Aachen*. 132-133, nr. 54; Ernst Berger and Reinhard Lullies, eds. *Antike Kunstwerke aus der Sammlung Ludwig: Katalog und Einzeldarstellungen*. Basel: Archäologischer Verlag and Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1979. 86-88, no. 32; Alexandre G. Mitchell. *Comic Pictures in Greek Vase-Painting: Humour in the Polis and the Dionysian World, in the Sixth and the Fifth Centuries B.C.* Thesis for D.Phil, School of Archeology, Oxford. Trinity Term, 2002. 166-67.

Discussion:

Scenes from the destruction of Troy are popular in Attic vase-painting, especially from c. 500-450 BCE.⁵⁸⁰ One of the most popular of the individual episodes is the rape of Cassandra by Ajax; the iconography of this scene is very uniform, with Cassandra shown falling towards or kneeling at the base of the cult statue of Athena and Ajax with his weapon, usually a sword, in one hand, while the other pulls at Cassandra's arm or hair.⁵⁸¹ (fig. 8.5.2-5) Cassandra is usually shown nude or with clothing in great disarray. Ajax is usually clothed, though in some later examples, he wears only a helmet.⁵⁸² The well-known vase in Naples, c. 480 BCE, positions his sword to metaphorically represent Ajax's desire.⁵⁸³ (fig. 8.5.4) The iconography of the recovery of Helen, by contrast, underwent several changes during the history of Attic vase-painting. By far the most popular arrangement in black-figure vases is to show Helen being led by the hand by

⁵⁸⁰ This popularity is sometimes explained by contemporary events – the sacks of Miletus in 494 BCE and Athens in 480 BCE. Bibliography on Attic Ilioupersis scenes: *LIMC* s.v. "Ilioupersis"; J. Boardman, "The Kleophrades Painter at Troy," *AntK*, 19 (1976), pp. 3-18; Karl Schefold, *Götter- und Heldensagen der Griechen in der spätarchaischen Kunst*. Munich: Hirmer, 1978. 254-260; Karl Schefold and Franz Jung, *Die Sagen von den Argonauten, von Theben und Troia in der klassischen und hellenistischen Kunst*. Munich: Hirmer, 1989. 276-297; David Castriota, *Myth, Ethos, and Actuality: Official Art in Fifth-century B.C. Athens*. Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992. 96-118; M.L. Hart, *Athens and Troy: The Narrative Treatment of the "Ilioupersis" in Archaic Attic Vase-Painting*. Diss. University of California, Los Angeles, 1992; Schefold, *Götter- und Heldensagen*, 329-335; Michael J. Anderson, "Onesimos and the Interpretation of Ilioupersis Iconography," *JHS*, 115 (1995), pp. 130-135; Michael J. Anderson, *The Fall of Troy in Early Greek Poetry and Art*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

⁵⁸¹ Examples: Berlin, Antikensammlung, F1698, BA # 310314; Boston (MA), Museum of Fine Arts, 59.178, BA # 206829; Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, H2422, BA # 201724; Paris, Musée du Louvre, G458, BA # 217220.

⁵⁸² See Paris, Musée du Louvre, G458, BA # 217220.

⁵⁸³ Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, H2422, BA # 201724.

Menelaos, the couple flanked by fellow walkers or onlookers, either warriors or women.⁵⁸⁴ (fig. 8.5.6) This schema is also used in red-figure.⁵⁸⁵ (fig. 8.5.7) Painters mark their relation as a married couple by showing Menelaos holding Helen by the hand as bridegrooms do brides or by having Helen unveil herself, a common bridal gesture.⁵⁸⁶ Several of these black-figure scenes combine the figures of Menelaos and Helen with those of Ajax and Cassandra.⁵⁸⁷ (fig. 8.5.8) Another iconography, present in black-figure but far more popular in red-figure, shows the first confrontation of the couple, with Menelaos striding or running towards Helen.⁵⁸⁸ (fig. 8.5.9-11) He either menaces with his sword or, remembering his love, throws it aside. With his other hand he usually touches Helen. She moves away from him towards the altar on which she will take refuge, with her head and upper body turned back towards him; with one hand she pulls at her veil in

⁵⁸⁴ Munich, Antikensammlungen, J75, BA # 310434.

⁵⁸⁵ Berlin, Antikensammlung, F2205, BA # 204102.

⁵⁸⁶ Helen holds her veil in a bridal gesture on the majority of vases with this iconography, for example: Berlin, Antikensammlung, F1685, BA # 310170; Berlin, Antikensammlung, F1842, BA # 320121; London, British Museum, B243, BA # 320294; London, British Museum, B244, BA # 320085; New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 44.11.1, BA # 13330; New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 69.233.1, BA # 320086. On the use of bridal imagery in these and other mythological scenes, see J.H. Oakley, "Nuptial Nuances: Wedding Images in Non-Wedding Scenes of Myth," in *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, ed. E.D. Reeder. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1995. pp. 63-73. For wedding scenes with the groom leading the bride by the wrist, see for example: Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, 1966.888, BA # 34; Berlin, Antikensammlung, 3373, BA # 430; Tübingen, Eberhard-Karls-Univ., Arch. Inst., 1219, BA # 11634; Athens, National Museum, 15214, BA # 200081; Florence, Museo Archeologico Etrusco, 4025, BA # 205957; Paris, Musée du Louvre, L55, BA # 211247; London, British Museum, D11, BA # 211904; Brussels, Musées Royaux, A3547, BA # 216669.

⁵⁸⁷ San Simeon (CA), Hearst Historical State Monument, 5476, BA # 7865 and Berlin, Antikensammlung, F1685, BA # 310170.

⁵⁸⁸ For examples, see Boston (MA), Museum of Fine Arts, 13.186, BA # 204681; Berlin, Antikensammlung, 1970.9, BA # 318; Toledo (OH), Museum of Art, 67.154, BA # 695.

the bridal gesture while with the other she usually reaches towards him to plead for mercy. One surviving red-figure vase includes both Menelaos and Helen and Ajax and Cassandra.⁵⁸⁹

The Kabirion scene has made some comic changes to the arrangements of its Attic models that at first make it appear very different, though it is in true as close to them as the other burlesque scenes. For Cassandra's statue of Athena and Helen's altar, the painter has substituted herms – rude, rural objects instead of the dignified accessories of a great city's worship. As for Ajax and Cassandra, it is difficult to be certain whether Ajax's nudity is the result of the painter's knowledge of one of the Attic examples which show him so, but, since the body of Cassandra is uniformly exposed in the Attic iconography, it may be that the Kabirion vase, by making her clothed and Ajax nude, is executing a comic reversal; the same may be true of the clothed Helen and nude Menelaos. A more obvious comic change is in the position of Ajax's sword, which, placed in front of his body in Attic vase-painting, was an hinted indication of his phallos; here, positioned behind his body, it appears at the same time as if his erection is a continuation of it and that he thrusts it into his own anus. The painter seems to have very well understood the Attic link of sword and phallos. The changes made to the Menelaos and Helen pair are also of the slap-stick variety, for the painter has turned her around, so that she flees towards, instead of away from, Menelaos, and both seem to be in a panic, though they already touch hands in the traditional spousal gesture. Such changes are much more responsible for the burlesque quality of the work than is the relatively slight grotesqueness of the figure's bodies.

⁵⁸⁹ Malibu (CA), The J. Paul Getty Museum, 80.AE.154, BA # 16776.

Judgment of Paris

Two Kabirion vases have been claimed to be burlesque representations of the Judgment of Paris:

no. 366 (Boston, MFA, 99533) (fig. 8.6.1)

no. 401 (London, private coll.) (fig. 8.6.6)

Description:

no. 366 (Boston, MFA, 99533):

The scene continues around the entire cup.⁵⁹⁰ On one side, on the right, a grotesque male figure (large eyes, flattened nose, large mouth) plays a lyre; by his head is written an *alpha*, for Alexandros. Dressed in Oriental costume, with a pointed Phrygian hat, he sits on a round rock, painted with dots within outlines. He faces two somewhat grotesque female figures (large eyes, pug noses, open mouths), also sitting on rocks, each holding with one hand to the ends of a stick and gesturing with the other – the left-most holds out two fingers, the other her whole hand. They are similarly dressed, but the one to the right wears a veil and has a more grotesque face (lantern-jawed). On the other side, a naked, grotesque Hermes (puny limbs, phallic, large eyes, slanting forehead) gestures with his caduceus towards two more female figures seated on rocks. At the left is Hera

⁵⁹⁰ Bibliography: *KHI*, M18; Arthur Fairbanks. *Catalogue of Greek and Etruscan Vases*. Cambridge, Mass.: Published for the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, by the Harvard University Press, 1928. nr. 562, pl. 69; Peter Levi, "A Kabirion Vase," *JHS*, 84 (1964), pp. 155-156. 155; T. B. L. Webster. *Monuments Illustrating Old and Middle Comedy*. London: Institute of Classical Studies, 1978. 20; Alexandre G. Mitchell. *Comic Pictures in Greek Vase-Painting: Humour in the Polis and the Dionysian World, in the Sixth and the Fifth Centuries B.C.* Thesis for D.Phil, School of Archeology, Oxford. Trinity Term, 2002. 165-166.

(labeled) wearing a veil, holding a scepter, and with a frontal, grotesque face (large eyes, gaping mouth). The other is a somewhat grotesque female (bulging cheeks and prominent nose), holding a garland and nude to the waist, and thus recognizable as Aphrodite.

Wolters and Bruns identified the action of the women holding the stick as a game of *morra* (Latin: *micare digitis*).⁵⁹¹ (fig. 8.6.2) The game is still played in southern Italy: two partners make a fist behind their backs and, at a given signal, extend their hands, displaying a number of fingers. The first player to call out the total number of fingers wins the round, and advances their hold on the stick, progressing hand-over-hand to the center. Wolters and Bruns proposed that *morra* was appropriate to the scene because it was associated with Phrygia.⁵⁹² In the vase illustrated, the woman on the left holds out two fingers, and the woman on the right her whole hand, exactly as on the Kabirion vase, though here, the woman on the right is definitely winning the game, with her hand far advanced on the stick. It seems likely that the whole-hand gesture is not a showing of five fingers, but is rather a gesture of triumph at having won a round. If this is so, we might see the woman on the right in the Kabirion scene, distinguished by her veil, greater grotesqueness, and victory in the game, as the last member of the judged triad, the goddess Athena. Other scholars have tended to read these figures as anonymous nymphs

⁵⁹¹ Figure: A. Baumeister, *Denkmäler des klassischen Altertums zur erläuterung des Lebens der Griechen und Römer in Religion, kunst und sitte*. Munich and Leipzig: R. Oldenbourg, 1885-1888. fig. 997. Other discussions of the representations of and significance of *morra* include: Adolf Greifenhagen, *Griechische Erosen*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1957. 51, 78; Herbert A. Cahn, "Morra: Drei Silene beim Knobeln," in *Kotinos, Festschrift für Erika Simon*. ed. Heide Froning, Tonio Hölscher, and Harold Mielsch. Mainz: P. von Zabern, 1992. pp. 214-17; Herbert Hoffman, *Sotades: Symbols of Immortality on Greek Vases*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997. 142.

⁵⁹² Citing Roscher, *Myth Lex* III I, 1610.16.

attendant on Paris; Braun attempts to parallel this arrangement to several scenes of the Judgment of Paris in South Italian vase-painting in which one goddess is missing (though this identification is disputed).⁵⁹³ The problem with identifying either one of these figures as Athena would be her relationship to Hermes, if he is indeed shown as conducting Hera and Aphrodite to Paris; however, since they, too, are seated, it would seem that they have already all arrived, and Hermes is simply moving among them.

Webster sees on this vase his masks types T, Z, and B.⁵⁹⁴ (fig.10.6.3)

no. 401 (London, private coll.):

Four figures, all in semi-grotesque style (large heads, sloping foreheads, large eyes, prominent lips).⁵⁹⁵ On the right, a male figure reclines on a kline, holding out a garland. Two draped women face him, holding out their hands in a gesture – pleading? Between them, facing in the opposite direction, is a nude woman with a grotesque body (puny limbs, crooked legs and hips) with a cloth wrapped around her shoulders, looking into a mirror. Reverse: a grotesque traveler chased by an ogress (see section on “Ogresses”).

Bruns identified this scene as a burlesque version of the Judgment of Paris, but this interpretation is disputable. Besides the nudity and mirror of the central woman, the

⁵⁹³ For these scenes, see Alexander Cambitoglou and A. D. Trendall, *Apulian Red-Figured Vase-Painters of the Plain Style*. Archaeological Institute of America, 1961. 28, 34.

⁵⁹⁴ T. B. L. Webster. *Monuments Illustrating Old and Middle Comedy*. London: Institute of Classical Studies, 1978. 20.

⁵⁹⁵ Bibliography: Peter Levi, “A Kabirion Vase,” *JHS*, 84 (1964), pp. 155-156.

arrangement bears no resemblance to the other Boeotian Judgments, and little similarity to any Attic version. Neither of the other goddesses are shown with attributes, and Paris is uniformly placed in an outdoor setting, not on a kline. Levi, when he published the vase, thought it was simply a caricature of some unidentifiable heroic couple, with the female partner preparing herself to join her consort. The clothed females would then be servants. The wreath could be offered by the hero to his lover or could merely be held out in a gesture of revelry – compare to no. 358 (Berlin, Staatliche Mus., 3286). (fig. 6.7) Perhaps the clothed maidservant at the center of the scene is making a gesture of imploring, and thus the story is about an ugly old woman trying to seduce a handsome young man. Ancient literary comedy frequently featured this type of story, usually in non-mythological contexts. In any case, this scene does not seem to be a Judgment of Paris.

Other relevant Boeotian vases:

Another, non-grotesque representation of the Judgment of Paris by a Boeotian painter was found at the Kabirion sanctuary:

no. 368 (Boston, MFA, 99535) (fig. 8.6.4): Paris, in Oriental costume, plays the lyre, facing Hermes, Hera, Athena, all standing, and a seated Aphrodite with an Eros.⁵⁹⁶

There is another Boeotian vase with a Judgment scene, but with no recorded findspot; it is a kantharos from the end of 5th c. BCE, painted in an Atticizing style:

Würzburg, Wagner-Mus, L 466 (fig. 8.6.5)

⁵⁹⁶ Bibliography: KH I, pl. 28.1; Arthur Fairbanks. *Catalogue of Greek and Etruscan Vases*. Cambridge, Mass.: Published for the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, by the Harvard University Press, 1928. nr. 565, pl. 70.

Discussion:

The Attic iconography of the Judgment of Paris changes several slight but important details over the course of its history, and thus this comparison presents a good opportunity to see just what period of Attic art the Kabirion painters were responding to.⁵⁹⁷ (fig. 8.6.8-12) On black-figure vases from the early 6th century to about 550 BCE, a frightened Paris flees the apparition of the goddesses; in the Archaic period, he becomes resigned to his fate, and is shown calmly standing or, most usually, sitting, awaiting the goddesses who parade toward him. Paris is shown dressed as a traveler or herdsman, and the order of the goddesses varies. Hermes' role is now to conduct them, leading their procession towards Paris. With the introduction of red-figure, there is a greater than usual attention to landscape for this scene, especially to the rocks on which Paris or the goddesses sit, for example on two vases, in Berlin and London, from c. 480-470 BCE.⁵⁹⁸ (fig. 8.6.8-9) Beginning c. 530 BCE, painters change Paris' costume; now, fitting his status as a Trojan prince, he is dressed in Oriental costume.⁵⁹⁹ (fig. 8.6.9-12) There are a

⁵⁹⁷ Bibliography on Attic representations of the Judgment of Paris: *LIMC*, s.v. "Paridis Iudicium," s.v. "Alexandros," 1-15, s.v. "Aphrodites," 1417-1444, s.v. "Athena," 10, 174, 183, 194, 405-427, s.v. "Hera," 423-446, and s.v. "Hermes," 453-480bis; Türk, *ML III I* (1897-1902) 1586-1592, 1607-1631, s.v. "Paris"; E. Wüst, *RE XVIII 4* (1949) 1494-1499, 1518-1529, s.v. "Paris I"; Christoph W. Clairmont, *Das Parisurteil in der antiken Kunst*. Zurich: 1951; Irmgard Raab, *Zu den Darstellungen des Parisurteils in der griechischen Kunst*. Frankfurt: Lang, 1972; J.M. Moret, "Le judgment de Pâris en Grande-Grèce: Mythe et actualité politique," *AntK* 21 (1978), pp. 76-98; K.W. Arafat, *Classical Zeus: A Study in Art and Literature*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990. 113-134; Gudrun Ahlberg-Cornell, *Myth and Epos in Early Greek Art: Representation and Interpretation*. Jonsered: P. Aströms Förlag, 1992. 50-51.

⁵⁹⁸ Berlin, Antikensammlung, F2291, BA # 204685; London, British Museum, E178, BA # 205649.

few instances of a Paris in Oriental dress awaiting the arrival of a procession of goddesses, such as the Copenhagen vase, c. 430 BCE, but most painters who use this dress show him surrounded by goddesses who have already arrived, usually in conversation with Hermes. In the 400s, the scene appears in Kersch-ware and South Italian vases, which often return to showing him in ephebic or pastoral dress, for example, on a vase, now in Oxford, from c. 360 BCE.⁶⁰⁰ (fig. 8.6.13) Throughout the history of the iconography, in several examples from black-figure to c. 350 BCE, one or more of the goddesses are shown seated, and the consistency of this variant means that it cannot be used to date the Kabirion scene.⁶⁰¹

Both the grotesque and the non-grotesque Kabirion Judgment scenes display a curious mix of adoptions from the Attic models. Both enthusiastically employ the new Oriental costume (the Würzburg kantharos puts Paris in generic drapery), but both retain the older idea of a procession of goddesses one after another instead of all grouped around Paris in the circular type of composition usually favored by those Attic artists who use the Oriental costume. The non-grotesque Boeotian example seems to have been painted by someone aware of such compositions, since he shows a seated Aphrodite, but her position at the end of a procession of standing Hermes, Hera, and Athena makes clear

⁵⁹⁹ Copenhagen, National Museum, 731, BA # 7928; St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, ST1807, BA # 215695; Karlsruhe, Badisches Landesmuseum, 259, BA # 220515.

⁶⁰⁰ For example, Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, 1944.15, BA # 430003.; see also Alexander Cambitoglou and A. D. Trendall, *Apulian Red-Figured Vase-Painters of the Plain Style*. Archaeological Institute of America, 1961. 28, 34.

⁶⁰¹ Seated goddesses appear on: Chicago (IL), Univ. of Chicago, D.& A. Smart Gall., 1889.15, BA # 306463; Athens, National Museum, 14908, BA # 211251; Berlin, now lost, once Antikensammlung, F2633, BA # 215722; Karlsruhe, Badisches Landesmuseum, 259, BA # 220515; Athens, National Museum, 1181, BA # 230423.

his loyalties to the older compositions. The Kabirion vase, too, clearly demonstrates a use of older iconography with its prominent rocks, whose rotundity is more similar to the early to mid 5th c. BCE Judgment scenes than contemporary Attic or South Italian versions. His lyre, present in both Boeotian examples, is significant as well, since the Attic Paris, when in Oriental dress, is never in surviving examples shown playing the lyre, which is an instrument more appropriate to his older incarnation as a herd-boy. Thus, while the use of Oriental costume shows Boeotian artist's close attention to changes in Attic iconography, these other details show the ability of these artists to retain the aspects that pleased them of earlier iconography. It is accordingly sometimes necessary to look at Attic vases made some time before the Kabirion burlesques to understand the significance of certain details. That both the grotesque and the non-grotesque Judgment share these idiosyncratic stylistic retentions does not necessarily mean, as Mitchell argues, that the Kabirion vases burlesque solely a local painting tradition, but merely that painters in the grotesque and non-grotesque styles worked together, and were even probably identical.⁶⁰²

The overall comic nature of the Kabirion burlesque Judgment lies, of course, in the unsightliness of all the entrants of this beauty contest. Even Paris, so mythically handsome, has been turned into an ugly grotesque; what is more, he with open mouth appears to be singing, accompanying himself on the lyre, thus showing himself completely unaware of the surrounding deities – another instance, similar to the Theseus vase, of comic imperception (see section on “Theseus and the Sow”). Hermes, who

⁶⁰² Alexandre G. Mitchell. *Comic Pictures in Greek Vase-Painting: Humour in the Polis and the Dionysian World, in the Sixth and the Fifth Centuries B.C.* Thesis for D.Phil, School of Archeology, Oxford. Trinity Term, 2002. 165-166.

always faces Paris in the Attic iconography, has been turned around; this is a weak but apparently favorite joke, seen also in the positioning of Helen in the *Ilioupersis* burlesque (see section on the “*Ilioupersis*”). Of the goddesses, Aphrodite has suffered the least mockery (unless we are to make something of her close association with Hermes). Hera’s frontal face makes her even more ugly than the usual caricature. If the *morra*-player is Athena, the joke is rather inspired, for it turns her skills as the goddess of wisdom to the not-very-impressive task of competitively counting fingers, and also makes her, like Paris, appear unaware of the narrative in which they find themselves.

Kadmos

There is one Kabirion vase with a scene argued to be that of Kadmos' encounter with the Dragon:

no. 356 (Berlin, Staatliche Mus., 3284), c. 420-400 BCE (fig. 8.7.1)

Description:

From a thicket of long reeds on the right, a large snake rears its head, starting a male figure on the left.⁶⁰³ Extremely grotesque (small limbs, large belly, dangling phallus, large eyes, bulbous nose, gaping mouth), this figure falls backwards, apparently defecating in fear. He holds a walking-stick and wears some clothing as well as a traveler's hat. Behind him, having flown off his shoulders, is a traveling yoke with baggage and a situla attached. Reverse: grotesque figures; see discussion of this scene in the section on "Acheloos."

⁶⁰³ Bibliography: *KHI*, K 22; A. Furtwängler, "Erwerbungen der Antikensammlungen in Deutschland: Berlin," *AA*, 10 (1895), pp. 32-43. 36; M. Rostowzew, "Die Hellenistisch-Römische Architekturlandschaft," *RM*, 26 (1911), pp. 2-185. p. 125-126; Margarete Bieber, *Denkmäler zum Theaterwesen im Altertum*. Berlin: W. de Gruyter & Co., 1920. pl. 87, p. 153ff; Alfred Körte, review of M. Bieber, Bieber, *Denkmäler zum Theaterwesen im Altertum*. *Neue Jarhbucher fur das klassische Altertum*, pp. 308-312; Gottfried von Lücken, *Griechische Vasenbilder in Wien*. Vienna: Ed. Hölzel [n.d.]. pl. 26-27; Lapalus, "Parodies de thèmes héroïques," 75-78; Lennart Breitholtz, *Die dorische Farce im griechischen Mutterland vor dem 5. Jahrhundert: Hypothese oder Realität*. Stockholm : Almquist & Wilksell, 1960. 19-20; Margarete Bieber, *History of the Greek and Roman Theater*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961. fig. 207; A.D. Trendall, *Phylax Vases*. London: University of London, Institute of Classical Studies, 1967. 23; T. B. L. Webster. *Monuments Illustrating Old and Middle Comedy*. London: Institute of Classical Studies, 1978. 20.

The extremely mask-like face of this figure is one of the best pieces of evidence for those who argue for the existence of dramatic sources for these vase scenes. Webster identifies it as his Mask B.⁶⁰⁴ (fig. 8.7.2)

Discussion:

There are relatively few Attic scenes of Kadmus' encounter with the Dragon.⁶⁰⁵ Some vases merely allude to the action, showing Kadmus in conversation with his patroness, Athena, while carrying a hydria with which to get water from the spring.⁶⁰⁶ (fig. 8.7.3) Attic painters contemporary to the Kabirion vases produced more explicit scenes, as on a fragmentary vase by the Sotades Painter, c. 460 BCE, a lekythos in Bologna and a calyx-krater in New York, both c. 450-440 BCE, and a bell-krater in New York, c. 435 BCE.⁶⁰⁷ (fig. 8.7.4-7) The scene also appears on later Attic vases, with two examples from c. 420-410 BCE, and continues in the 4th c. on South Italian ware.⁶⁰⁸ (fig. 8.7.8-10) The Attic vases show Kadmos dressed as a traveler and usually outfitted with a

⁶⁰⁴ T. B. L. Webster. *Monuments Illustrating Old and Middle Comedy*. London: Institute of Classical Studies, 1978. 20.

⁶⁰⁵ Bibliography for Attic scenes of Kadmos and the Dragon: *LIMC* s.v. "Kadmos I"; O. Crusius, *ML* II I (1890-94) 824-893 s.v. "Kadmos II"; K. Latte, *RE* X 2 (1919) 1460-1472 s.v. "Kadmos 4"; Karl Schefold and F. Jung, *Die Urkönige, Perseus, Bellerophon, Herakles und Theseus in der klassischen und hellenistischen Kunst*. Munich: Hirmer, 1988. 34 ff.

⁶⁰⁶ For example: Amsterdam, Allard Pierson Museum, 1611, BA # 215350.

⁶⁰⁷ London, British Museum, D7, BA # 209460; Bologna, Museo Civico Archeologico, PU356 (PA 1159), BA # 209417; New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 07.286.66, BA # 207136; New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 22.139.11, BA # 214545.

⁶⁰⁸ Paris, Musée du Louvre, N3325, BA # 10851; Berlin, Staat. Mus.; Paris, Musée du Louvre, N3157 (Paestan).

hydria. Some include a female figure, the personification of the spring. The Dragon is in the form of a large snake whose head rises towards the hero. The Sotades Painter even shows it rising from a thicket of reeds, exactly like the Kabirion example. Another interesting feature of the iconography is that on two examples, the earlier New York vase and that of the Sotades Painter, Kadmos, instead of resolutely facing his opponent, is shown turning away, as if momentarily startled. Perhaps this is due to Kadmos' unawareness of the cause of his missing men – other Greek heroes are usually apprised of their opponents.

The figure on the Kabirion vase is easily the most frightened-looking character of all the Kabirion scenes, whose painters seem usually to find more amusing the idea of a stolid, dull-witted hero, unwary of approaching danger, as on the Theseus or Bellerophon vases. Perhaps the Kabirion Kadmos' fright is a comic exaggeration of the startled postures of some Attic Kadmos figures. Whether or not this is the case, the Kabirion scene makes other comic changes. This Kadmos carries not a hydria, which, from their deployment on the Parthenon frieze, would have carried religious, dignified connotations. Situlai and buckets, by contrast, are in Attic vase-painting shown as the accessories of bathing men and women – perhaps suggesting that Kadmos intended a bath?⁶⁰⁹ (fig. 8.7.11) The yoke makes this Kadmos into a solitary traveler, interrupted during the course of his wanderings, instead of the leader of an expedition, gone to rescue his missing men.

⁶⁰⁹ Examples of buckets in Attic vase-painting: associated with a woman or women washing at a laver: New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 1986.322.1, BA # 1142; Athens, Agora Museum, P27677, BA # 22340; Brussels, Musées Royaux, A889. Washing athletes: Paris, Musée du Louvre, G291, BA # 204715. Washing satyrs: Berkeley (CA), Phoebe Apperson Hearst Mus. of Anthropology, 8.4583, BA # 202585.

It has often been noted by scholars of this vase that Kadmos was a national hero, not only of Boeotia, but specifically of Thebes, of which he was the mythological founder.⁶¹⁰ According to Pausanias, the Thebans pointed out to travelers the very spring at which Kadmos killed the Dragon.⁶¹¹ Lapalus, arguing that the Kabirion vases show parodies of serious myths performed during the *dromena*, suggested that Kadmos must have been honored during the Kabirion rites.⁶¹² Upon examination, there is little to differentiate this vase from any other Kabirion burlesque scene, and its comparative fidelity to the Attic iconography of Kadmos shows that its painters was thinking about these models at least as much as any local tradition or performance.

⁶¹⁰ Apollodorus, 3.4.1.

⁶¹¹ Pausanias, 9.10.5.

⁶¹² Lapalus, "Parodies de thèmes héroïques," 75-78.

Kephalos

There is one Kabirion vase with a burlesque version of Kephalos hunting:
no. 303 (Athens, NM, 10429) (fig. 8.8.1)

Description:

At the left, a very grotesque male figure (puny limbs, large belly, dangling phallos, large head, sloping forehead, pug nose, protruding jaw) runs with a comically-exaggerated stride.⁶¹³ A large inscription identifies him as Kephalos. He wears a traveler's hat, and one arm is muffled in a cloak, while in the other he carries a club. He follows, and perhaps even holds the tail of, a grotesque dog (puny limbs, oversized torso, phallos) who chases a non-grotesque, though rather large, fox. If the hunter is Kephalos, the fox is presumably the uncapturable Teumessian Fox, which was ravaging Thebes, and the dog Laelaps, Prokris' gift to Kephalos, who was fated never to let its prey escape.⁶¹⁴
Reverse: unpainted

Other relevant Kabirion vases:

There are several other vases from the sanctuary with representations of similar animals or hunting scenes:

⁶¹³ Bibliography: *KHI*, K 9; H. L. Lorimer, "The Country Cart of Ancient Greece," *JHS*, 23 (1903), pp. 132-151. 138; Alexandre G. Mitchell. *Comic Pictures in Greek Vase-Painting: Humour in the Polis and the Dionysian World, in the Sixth and the Fifth Centuries B.C.* Thesis for D.Phil, School of Archeology, Oxford. Trinity Term, 2002. 170.

⁶¹⁴ Apollodorus, 2.57; Pausanias, 9.19.1.

no. 308 (Athens, NM, 10530) (fig. 8.8.2)

Two fragments with foxes.⁶¹⁵ The Kabirion painters painted two kinds of foxes, furry and smooth. The Kephalos fox is smooth and can be seen to be non-grotesque by a comparison with these examples.

no. 381 (Göttingen, Archäolog. Institut, 5406) (fig. 8.8.3)

Dogs hunting hares.⁶¹⁶ The grotesque style of the Kephalos dog can be seen in a comparison with these non-grotesque dogs.

no. 388 (Karlsruhe, Badisches Landesmuseum, B 2596) (fig. 8.8.4)

Grotesque hunters, non-grotesque dog and prey.⁶¹⁷

no. 379 (Dresden, Skulpturenslg., ZV1210) (fig. 8.8.5)

Another vase by the Kabirion Painter, with a similar grotesque hunter.⁶¹⁸ The comic situation is evidently that his dog has turned against him. This dog is in a non-grotesque style, and is much larger, relative to the hunter, than is Kephalos' dog.

no. 298 (Athens, NM, 12547) (fig. 8.8.6)

⁶¹⁵ Bibliography: *KH I*, K 10.

⁶¹⁶ Bibliography: *KH I*, S 18.

⁶¹⁷ Bibliography: *KH I*, K 54; Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe, *Antike Vasen: eine Auswahl aus den Beständen des Badischen Landesmuseums*. Karlsruhe: Das Landesmuseum, 1960. pl. 27.

⁶¹⁸ Bibliography: *KH I*, K 11.

Another vase by the Kabirion Painter, with two similar grotesque hunters, one running after a dog and the other reclining as a fox escapes him.⁶¹⁹ Both the dog and the fox are shown in non-grotesque style.

Discussion:

This Kabirion burlesque is unique among the Kabirion vases with identifiable mythological subjects in having no direct Attic model. Kephalos, though a relatively common figure on Attic vases, is never shown hunting a fox. Rather, he is most usually shown chased by Eos, who, falling in love, abducted him, or, rarely, with Prokris, his mortal wife.⁶²⁰ On a few vases, Kephalos is accompanied by a hunting dog, since he was known as a hunter and Eos abducted him while he was hunting, but the schema of these scenes is quite different from that of the Kabirion burlesque.⁶²¹ (fig. 8.8.7)

While seemingly not of interest for Attic painters, the choice of this subject is obvious for a Boeotian, since the Teumessian Fox had its sphere of activity near Thebes, and thus Kephalos, though originally Phokian, could have been an honorary Boeotian hero. The Kabirion Painter, as the similarity of his other scenes of grotesque hunters shows, simply used this schema, adding the name “Kephalos.” Of course, it is likely that

⁶¹⁹ Bibliography: *KH* I, K 7; Maxime Collignon and Louis Couve, *Catalogue des vases peints du Musée national d’Athènes*. Bibliothèque des Ecoles françaises d’Athènes et de Rome, fasc. 85 Paris: Fontemoing, 1902., no. 957.

⁶²⁰ For examples and bibliography, see *LIMC* s.v. “Kephalos.”

⁶²¹ Attic vases on which Kephalos, chased by Eos, is accompanied by a dog: Boston (MA), Museum of Fine Arts, 13.198, BA # 206356; Berlin, Antikensammlung, F2352, BA # 214639; Capua, Museo Campano, P7. A resting Kephalos is accompanied by a dog on Tübingen, Eberhard-Karls-Univ., Arch. Inst., S101347, BA # 214330.

Attic images of hunters in general influenced his idea of what hunting scenes should look like; compare, for example, the Kabirion Kephalos to a satyr hunting a fox on an askos, c. 450-400 BCE, with similar posture, club, and muffling cloak.⁶²² (fig. 8.8.9) From the similarity of Kephalos to his other grotesque hunters, it is not likely that the painter intended a comic reversal from handsomeness to ugliness, though in myth Kephalos was always praised as beautiful.⁶²³ The most prominent change that the painter has made is to show the dog in grotesque style; it is evident that Laelaps was considered an important element in the story.

⁶²² Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, V539, BA # 5746.

⁶²³ This is argued by Mitchell: "Kephalos' ugliness is what makes him a parody of the expected beautiful Kephalos loved by Dawn." Mitchell, 170.

Odysseus and Kirke

There are six Kabirion vases which have been thought to represent scenes of Odysseus and Kirke, all dating to approximately the third quarter of 4th c. BCE:

no. 402 (Mississippi, University of Mississippi P116) (fig. 8.9.1)

no. 398 (London, British Museum, 93.3-3.1) (fig. 8.9.2)

Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, G249. no inv. no. assigned in *KH* IV (fig. 8.9.3)

University of Chicago 1967.115.165. no inv. no. assigned in *KH* IV. (fig. 8.9.4)

no. 376 (Cambridge (Mass.), Fogg Art Museum, no inv no.) (fig. 8.9.5)

no. 363 (Bonn, Akademisches Kunstmus., 1768) (fig. 8.9.11)

Description:

no. 402 (Mississippi, University of Mississippi P116) (fig. 8.9.1)

On the left, a loom.⁶²⁴ At the center of the scene, a standing, draped woman with a grotesque body (small arms and legs, large torso, small head, large eyes) hands a cup to a partially-clothed, kneeling man with a grotesque body (large nose, humped back). The right-hand part of the field is not preserved. Reverse: floral decoration.

no. 398 (London, British Museum, 93.3-3.1) (fig. 8.9.2)

⁶²⁴ Bibliography: *KH* I, K 20; LIMC s.v. "Kirke," 31; CVA, USA 4, Baltimore, Robinson Coll., III g pl. 18.2; Alexandre G. Mitchell. *Comic Pictures in Greek Vase-Painting: Humour in the Polis and the Dionysian World, in the Sixth and the Fifth Centuries B.C.* Thesis for D.Phil, School of Archeology, Oxford. Trinity Term, 2002. 167-169. The looms in these Kabirion Kirke scenes have been of interest to scholars of ancient technology; see, for instance, Barbara Kelley McLauchlin, "New Evidence on the Mechanics of Loom Weights," *AJA*, 85.1 (1981), pp. 79-81.

On the left, a woman, labeled “Kirke” in the Boeotian alphabet; she has a slightly grotesque body (stooping posture).⁶²⁵ Her high forehead, small nose, and protruding lips have often resulted in an identification of the figure as negroid or a caricature of an Ethiopian, with some even going so far as to read the lines of her netted hair-covering as curly, African hair.⁶²⁶ It should be asked whether these supposed “negroid” traits are the intention of the painter or accidental resemblances to modern ideas of such caricature. Indeed, the resemblance of this Kirke to another grotesque woman produced by the Kabirios Painter, who shares her high forehead, snub nose, and large lips, though without

⁶²⁵ Bibliography: *KHI*, K 19; *LIMC* s.v. “Odysseus,” 147; s.v. “Kirke,” 30; H. B. Walters, “Odysseus and Kirke on a Boeotian Vase,” *JHS*, 13 (1893), pp. 77-87; Georges Perrot and Charles Chipiez, *Histoire de l’art dans l’antiquité*. Paris: Hachette et Cie, 1882-1914. 298-301; Ettore Romagnoli, “Ninfe e Cabiri,” *Ausonia*, 2 (1907), pp. 141-184. 161; Carl Robert, *Archaeologische Hermeneutik: Anleitung zur Deutung klassischer Bildwerke*. Berlin: Weidmann, 1919. 151; Salomon Reinach, *Monuments nouveaux de l’art antique. Courriers de l’art antique de la Gazette des beaux-arts*. Paris: S. Kra, 1924-25. vol. 1, 198; C.H. Johl, *Die Webstühle der Griechen und Römer*, Diss. Kiel 1917. 39, fig. 25; Ernst Pfuhl, *Malerei und Zeichnung der Griechen*. Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1923. fig. 616; Pericle Ducati, *Storia della ceramica greca*. Florence: Alinari, 1922. vol. 2, 438-439; Louis Séchan, *Etudes sur la tragédie grecque dans ses rapports avec la céramique*. Paris: Champion, 1926. 50; Lapalus, “Parodies de thèmes héroïques,” 70-74; J.H. Jonkees and W.J. Verdenius, *Platenatlas bij Homerus*. Haarlem: Tjeenk Willink, 1955. fig. 42; Margarete Bieber, *History of the Greek and Roman Theater*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961. 49; Odette Touchefeu, *Thèmes Odysséens dans l’art antique*. Paris, E. de Boccard, 1968. 98, no. 192; Ulrich Hausmann, “Oidopus und die Sphinx,” *Jb BadWürtt* 9 (1972), pp. 7-36. 30; Alexandre G. Mitchell. *Comic Pictures in Greek Vase-Painting: Humour in the Polis and the Dionysian World, in the Sixth and the Fifth Centuries B.C.* Thesis for D.Phil, School of Archeology, Oxford. Trinity Term, 2002. 167-169.

⁶²⁶ Scholars with particular interest in reading this Kirke as negroid: Grace Hadley Beardsley, *The Negro in Greek and Roman Civilization: A Study of the Ethiopian Type*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1929. reprinted New York: Russell & Russell, 1967. 59-61; Frank M. Snowden, Jr., *Blacks in Antiquity: Ethiopians in the Greco-Roman Experience*. Cambridge, Mass., Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1970. p. 23; Alain Bourgeois, *Le Grece antique devant la negritude*. Paris: Editions Présence Africaine, 1971. 25.

appearing negroid, should be a strong argument that the painter of the Kirke was aiming at merely another example of his type of female caricature, and made a few small exaggerations in his slipshod manner which have led the modern viewer to differently interpret this figure.⁶²⁷ (fig. 8.9.18) Kirke hands an exaggeratedly large cup to a bearded Odysseus, who leans on a staff, wears a traveler's cap and a sword, and is naked except for a small cloak wrapped around his shoulders. His body is grotesque, with puny limbs and an over-sized torso, and is comparable to other naked grotesque males by the Kabirios Painter.⁶²⁸ (fig. 8.9.20) He gestures with his hands, as if in conversation with Kirke. To the right, a loom. The rightmost figure in the scene is evidently one of Odysseus' companions; having consumed Kirke's potion, his head has turned into that of a pig, while the rest of his body, though it crouches animal-like on the ground, is still human. This representation of a partial transformation has been much commented on.⁶²⁹

Reverse: unpainted.

Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, G249. no inv. no. assigned in *KH* IV (fig. 8.9.3)

At the left, a grotesque Odysseus (frontal face, large eyes, gaping mouth, puny limbs, large, protruding belly) wearing a traveler's cap and naked except for a small cloak wrapped around his shoulders, gestures with his sword and scabbard, his legs in an

⁶²⁷ no. 297 (Athens, NM, 10466).

⁶²⁸ no. 297 (Athens, NM, 10466).

⁶²⁹ See, for example, Carl Robert, *Archaeologische Hermeneutik: Anleitung zur Deutung klassischer Bildwerke*. Berlin: Weidmann, 1919. 151.

undignified and unbalanced spread.⁶³⁰ Unlike the other Odysseus figures, he has a prominently displayed, dangling phallus. He seems to be advancing towards Kirke, who holds up a drinking cup, stirring its contents with a thin stick or wand. She has a relatively normal draped body, but a grotesque face (slanting forehead, large mouth). To the right, a loom. Reverse: Odysseus sailing on an amphora raft (see section on “Odysseus Traveling”).

University of Chicago 1967.115.165. no inv. no. assigned in *KH* IV. (fig. 8.9.4)

⁶³⁰ Bibliography: *KH* I, M16; LIMC s.v. “Odysseus,” 191 and s.v. “Kirke,” 32; Arthur Evans and Percy Gardner, *Catalogue of the Greek Vases in the Ashmolean Museum*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1893. no. 262; Salomon Reinach, *Pierres gravées des collections Marlborough et d’Orléans, des recueils d’Eckhel, Gori, Lévesque de Gravelle, Mariette, Millin, Stosch*. Paris: Firmin-Didot et Cie, 1895. pl. 37, no. 77.1, 77.3, and 77.4; Adolf Furtwängler, *Antiken Gemmen: Geschichte der Steinschneidekunst im klassischen Altertum*. Leipzig, Berlin, Giesecke & Devrient, 1900. pl. 20, 39, 41, 19.35-40; Ettore Romagnoli, “Ninfe e Cabiri,” *Ausonia*, 2 (1907), pp. 141-184. 162; C.H. Johl, *Die Webstühle der Griechen und Römer*, Diss. Kiel 1917. 38; Ernst Pfuhl, *Malerei und Zeichnung der Griechen*. Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1923. fig. 615; Salomon Reinach, *Monuments nouveaux de l’art antique. Courriers de l’art antique de la Gazette des beaux-arts*. Paris: S. Kra, 1924-25. vol. 1, 197ff; Margarete Bieber, *Denkmäler zum Theaterwesen im Altertum*. Berlin: W. de Gruyter & Co., 1920. 154-155; Lapalus, “Parodies de thèmes héroïques,” 74-75; Constant Willem Lunsingh Scheurleer, *Grieksche Ceramiek*. Rotterdam: Nijgh & van Ditmar n.v., 1936. fig. 119; Margarete Bieber, *Griechische Kleidung*. Berlin and Leipzig: W. de Gruyter & Co., 1928. 3; Odette Touchefeu, *Thèmes Odysseens dans l’art antique*. Paris, E. de Boccard, 1968. 99-100, nr. 195; T. B. L. Webster, *Monuments Illustrating Old and Middle Comedy*, 3rd ed. London: Institute of Classical Studies, 1978. 61 BV 1; Francois Lissarague, “Satyres, Sérieux S’Abstenir,” in *Le rire des Grecs: anthropologie du rire en Grèce ancienne*. Ed. Marie-Laurence Desclos. Grenoble: Millon, 2000. pp. 109-119. 109-110; Alexandre G. Mitchell, *Comic Pictures in Greek Vase-Painting: Humour in the Polis and the Dionysian World, in the Sixth and the Fifth Centuries B.C.* Thesis for D.Phil, School of Archeology, Oxford. Trinity Term, 2002. 167-169.

This unusual stamnos-like vase is poorly preserved, and it is difficult to be certain of the relation of the figures and whether it had two scenes or one continuous frieze.⁶³¹ The best preserved figures are those of a female and an old male. The grotesque female (wizened, long limbs, oversized head, large lips) holds out a drinking cup in one hand and with a bony finger of another touches the forehead of the grotesque male figure (oversized head, large and wrinkled features). He, like the woman, is fully clothed. In one hand, he carries a short, stick-like object; in the other, he supports a spear bearing a flag made out of an animal-skin with three circles emblazoned on it. Behind him, the remains of another figure, also outfitted with a flag. Another fragment, though in the current reconstruction of the vase placed at a distance, could show the last member in this procession, also with a grotesque head and body and carrying a flag. The last large fragment shows a duel; of one combatant, only the large, round shield survives; the other is fully preserved, and has a grotesque body (puny limbs, large torso, dangling phallus) and is equipped with a shield, sword, and a traveler's hat which, in the heat of battle, is falling off of his head. There was at least one more figure on the vase, but only a patch of paint remains of it.

Because of the drinking cup, scholars have uniformly identified the female figure as Kirke, although some have disagreed about the identities of the approaching men: Touchefeu-Meynier maintained that the man on whose forehead the woman's finger was

⁶³¹ Bibliography: *KHI*, 100. D. M. Robinson, "Two Unpublished Vase Illustrations from Homer," *AJA*, 19 (1915), pp. 1-19; Odette Touchefeu-Meynier, "Ulysse et Circé: notes sur le chant X de l'Odyssée," *REA*, 63 (1961), pp. 268-269; Odette Touchefeu-Meynier, *Thèmes odysseens dans l'art antique*. Paris: E. de Boccard, 1968. 100-101; Karl Kilinski in Warren G. Moon, *Greek Vase-Painting in Midwestern Collections*. Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1979. 216-217.

laid was Odysseus, and even that the stick-like object he holds was a caricature of his protective *moly*.⁶³² Kilinski argued that Odysseus should approach Kirke alone, not in procession, and read the scene as a grotesque representation of the first encounter of Odysseus's men with Kirke, and additionally that her loom could have appeared on a missing fragment.⁶³³ Both Touchefeu-Meynier and Kilinski think that the duelists are not directly related to the Kirke scene, though both agree that the combatant with the traveler's hat is very similar to other representations of Odysseus, and should probably be identified as him, engaged in another of his mythological exploits.

It is true that certain details of this vase can be paralleled in Attic imagery – for example, the motif of a pointed hat falling off of its owner's head appears on some Melian terracotta plaques from c. 460–450 BCE.⁶³⁴ (fig. 8.9.6) There remain many strange and unique passages, most notably, the touch on the forehead and the skin-flags. The previous three Kabirion Kirke scenes, though they may appear at first glance to be very different both from one another and the Attic iconography, have been argued to be in fact very faithful to their Attic models, making changes only for comic effect. This Kabirion vase would break this pattern, if it is indeed a scene of Kirke. The possibility that it is not should be considered. Perhaps it is a burlesque of initiation?

no. 376 (Cambridge (Mass.), Fogg Art Museum, no inv no.) (fig. 8.9.5)

⁶³² Odette Touchefeu-Meynier, *Thèmes odysseens dans l'art antique*. Paris: E. de Boccard, 1968. 100-101.

⁶³³ Karl Kilinski in Warren G. Moon, *Greek Vase-Painting in Midwestern Collections*. Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1979. 122.

⁶³⁴ New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 30.11.9.

On the left, a loom.⁶³⁵ At the center of the scene, a seated, draped woman with a somewhat grotesque body (large torso, long arms, large eyes), holding an objects (likely a spindle – compare the position of the hands to the spindle-wielding woman in fig. 8.9.7⁶³⁶), in conversation with two standing men, only partially preserved. They have grotesque faces (prominent lips and thick, fat features) and both wear a traveler's cap along with a cloak wrapped around their upper arms. The man closest to the woman leans on a walking stick. Reverse: floral decoration.

This vase has usually been identified as another scene of Odysseus and Kirke, but Mitchell has recently suggested that it may instead be a parody of Penelope and the suitors.⁶³⁷ This is because the scene does not include a drinking cup, something that features on all other Kabirion Kirke scenes, and also because there are two male figures, instead of the lone Odysseus required in the Homeric narrative and featured on the other Kabirion examples. It is tempting to identify a woman seated at a loom as Penelope, as she appears on the well-known Attic vase in Chiusi; however, Kirke's definite association with the loom in the other Kabirion scenes means that the connection of

⁶³⁵ Bibliography; KH I, K 21; LIMC s.v. "Kirke," 29; CVA, USA, Hoppin Coll. pl. 5.5; Alexandre G. Mitchell. *Comic Pictures in Greek Vase-Painting: Humour in the Polis and the Dionysian World, in the Sixth and the Fifth Centuries B.C.* Thesis for D.Phil, School of Archeology, Oxford. Trinity Term, 2002. 167-169; Luca Giuliani, "Odysseus and Kirke: Iconography in a Pre-Literate Culture," in *Greek Vases, Images, and Controversies*, ed. Clemente Marconi. Boston: Brill, 2004. pp. 85-96.

⁶³⁶ London, British Museum, E215, BA # 214529. Other comparable spindles: Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, 37.24, BA # 203806; Munich, Antikensammlungen, SL476, BA # 214538; Tübingen, Eberhard-Karls-Univ., Arch. Inst., 1588, BA # 16873; Tübingen, Eberhard-Karls-Univ., Arch. Inst., 5644, BA # 11744.

⁶³⁷ Alexandre G. Mitchell. *Comic Pictures in Greek Vase-Painting: Humour in the Polis and the Dionysian World, in the Sixth and the Fifth Centuries B.C.* Thesis for D.Phil, School of Archeology, Oxford. Trinity Term, 2002. 169.

looms to Penelope cannot be automatic.⁶³⁸ (fig. 8.9.8) The identification of the male figures as suitors is also problematic, given their traveler's hats, cloaks, and staff. It is true that the suitors traveled to court Penelope, but the story's emphasis was on their firm establishment in Odysseus's house, where they would soon have discarded their travelers' equipment.⁶³⁹ Odysseus, by contrast, is often shown in traveler's dress, both in Attic vase-painting and in the other Kabirion Kirke scenes; moreover, he often leans in conversation on his stick, as on no. 398 (London, British Museum, 93.3-3.1) or several Attic examples.⁶⁴⁰ (fig. 8.9.9) If the seated woman is Kirke, perhaps the painter has merely ignored the narrative requirement of Odysseus' lack of companions (the missing area on no. 402 (Mississippi, University of Mississippi P116) might have also accommodated another companion), or perhaps this is a scene of the first encounter of the companions with Kirke, with the leader of the expedition simply given the posture and character of Odysseus. The usual cup could have been painted in the area of the scene now missing, though this position – away from Kirke and between the men - would not have much narrative value. If the woman is not Kirke, it could be Penelope, speaking to Odysseus without having yet recognized him. However plausible these interpretations, it must be kept in mind that there are no details specific enough to make one certain; indeed, the scene might not even be mythological. There are a significant number of Attic vases showing men leaning on their sticks, in conversation with seated women, some of

⁶³⁸ Chiusi, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, 1831, BA # 216789.

⁶³⁹ See the suitors' dress in the Attic Berlin, Antikensammlung, F2588, BA # 216788.

⁶⁴⁰ An example of an Attic Odysseus leaning on his stick: London, British Museum, E56, BA # 205225.

whom are even engaged in wool-working; the commercial character of this interaction is made explicit on a vase in Adolphseck, which shows the man holding out a money-purse towards the woman.⁶⁴¹ (fig. 8.9.10) Thus, the Kabirion vase may equally well show a prostitute solicited by customers as Kirke or Penelope in conversation with Odysseus, and, at present, it seems that there is no way to decide which interpretation is better. This vase will therefore be left out of subsequent discussions of the Kirke theme.

no. 363 (Bonn, Akademisches Kunstmus., 1768) (fig. 8.9.11)

To the left, a grotesque man (puny limbs, large torso, stooped posture) leans on a stick.⁶⁴² He calmly faces a grotesque female figure (long arms, large belly, puffed cheeks) who gestures towards him with her far hand. A large pig rushes from her towards him, its front feet flung out and its snout upturned. Reverse: a rabbit on its hind legs, between geese.

This scene has always been identified as showing the confrontation of Odysseus and Kirke, and it is tempting to identify the male figure as Odysseus, based on his posture of cross-leggedly leaning on a traveler's staff. There are some important differences. The male figure does not wear a short cloak around his shoulders nor a traveler's hat, as do

⁶⁴¹ Adolphseck, Schloss Fasanerie, 41, BA # 206482. Other examples of a wool-working woman: London, British Museum, E215, BA # 214529; Munich, Antikensammlungen, SL476, BA # 214538.

⁶⁴² Bibliography: *KHI*, K 18; *LIMC* s.v. "Kirke" 28; A. D. Ure and P.N. Ure, "Boeotian Vases in the Akademisches Kunstmuseum in Bonn, *AA*, 48 (1933), pp. 2-42. 25-26; Chr. Grunwald, *Antiken aus dem Akademischen Kunstmuseum Bonn*, vol. II. Düsseldorf: Rheinland-Verl., 1971. 128.

the other identifiable Kabirion Odysseus figures. The female figure does not have a cup or a wand, nor is she associated with a loom, as are the other identifiable Kirkes. The pig, as well, is fully a pig, and does not give so much as a hint that it was ever a human being. The scene has many more links to the Attic iconography of the encounter of Theseus with the Krommyonian Sow.⁶⁴³ (fig. 8.9.12-15) Here, Theseus stands to one side, usually the left, preparing with a sword or spear to meet the attack of the sow, which rushes towards him, hooves and snout eagerly uplifted. Its aged female mistress raises her far hand to her cheek in distress while stretching out her far hand, either urging on the sow or supplicating Theseus. The Kabirion vase, while closely following the positions, postures, and gestures of the old woman and her sow, has changed Theseus from an handsome, brave ephebe into a grotesquely ugly figure who, leaning on his staff, either fails to recognize his danger or refuses to participate in the narrative. This tendency to subvert the mythological narrative will be commented on in other Kabirion vases.

Other relevant Boeotian vases:

There is a Boeotian skyphos (Six technique) showing a draped, non-grotesque female figure holding a cup and a wand, indicating that she is Kirke.⁶⁴⁴ (fig. 8.9.16)

Discussion:

The Kabirion vases show an awareness of the Attic iconography of Kirke, even though the scene was most popular in Attic art from c. 550-440 BCE, considerably earlier

⁶⁴³ For this iconography, see *LIMC*, s.v. “Krommyo.”

⁶⁴⁴ Nauplia, Mus. 144. Biblio: Wolters, AM 55, 1930, 209 ff; *LIMC*, s.v. “Kirke,” 27.

than the Kabirion vases.⁶⁴⁵ This Attic iconography always shows Odysseus confronting Kirke after the first transformation of his companions, though some images do show, as does the Kabirion scene in London, only partially-transformed men.⁶⁴⁶ (fig. 8.9.21-25) The earlier vases focus on Odysseus' intervention, usually combining Kirke's offering of the potion to him and his threatening of her with his sword.⁶⁴⁷ The earliest example is on a cup in Boston, c. 550 BCE, on which a naked Kirke holds out a cup, whose contents she is mixing with a wand, to a partially-transformed companion.⁶⁴⁸ (fig. 8.9.21) Other companions, with different animal-heads on human bodies, surround this central pair, while Odysseus, bearded and naked except for a cloak, rushes in with his sword from the right. Another black-figure example, from c. 510 BCE, shows Kirke dressed and seated, without a cup or wand, threatened by a naked Odysseus and surrounded by three

⁶⁴⁵ See the discussion and bibliography in *LIMC*, s.v. "Kirke," as well as: E. Bethe, *RE* XI (1921) 501-505, s.v. "Kirke"; *KIPauly* III (1969) 220-221, s.v. "Kirke"; K. Seeliger, *ML* II I (1890-94) 1193-1204, s.v. "Kirke"; B. Andreae et al., *Ulisse, il mito e la memoria*. Rome: Progetti museali, 1996; Judith Yarnall, *Transformations of Circe: The History of an Enchantress*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994; Bernhard Paetz, *Kirke und Odysseus: Überlieferung und Deutung von Homer bis Calderon*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1970; J. Cerquand, "The Cup and the Sword: Odysseus Intimidates Circe on a Column-Krater in Sydney," *AA* (1988), pp. 41-53; F. Müller, *Die antiken Odysseeillustrationen in ihrer kunsthistorischen Entwicklung*. Berlin, 1913; Odette Touchefeu, *Thèmes Odysseens dans l'art antique*. Paris, E. de Boccard, 1968. 81-131.

⁶⁴⁶ Examples of partially-transformed companions: Taranto, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, 9125, BA # 340780;

⁶⁴⁷ This style of compressed narrative has resulted in several interesting discussions of these vases: Anthony Snodgrass, *Homer and the Artists: Text and Picture in Early Greek Art*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 58; and Mark Stansbury-O'Donnell, *Pictorial Narrative in Ancient Greek Art*. Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 1999. 89.

⁶⁴⁸ Boston (MA), Museum of Fine Arts, 99.518, BA # 302569.

partially-transformed companions with pigs' heads.⁶⁴⁹ (fig. 8.9.22) In red-figure, the iconography can show just Kirke and Odysseus, without any companions, as on an example, c. 460 BCE, in Paris; here, Kirke flees with her cup and wand, and Odysseus wears a traveler's hat.⁶⁵⁰ (fig. 8.9.23) In other cases, only Kirke and a transformed companion are shown, as in two other vases from c. 460 BCE, with pig-headed companions and Kirke holding either a cup and wand or solely a long wand.⁶⁵¹ (fig. 8.9.24-25) Two final examples, from c. 440 BCE, show pig-headed companions, a threatening Odysseus wearing a traveler's hat, and a fleeing Kirke having dropped her cup and wand.⁶⁵² (fig. 8.9.26-27) The Kabirion painters' close attention to these Attic examples is shown not only by the use of similar schemata – Odysseus threatening Kirke, who offers her potion – but also by similar details – companions partially transformed into pigs,⁶⁵³ Odysseus's traveler's garb,⁶⁵⁴ and Kirke's cup and wand.⁶⁵⁵

⁶⁴⁹ Taranto, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, 9125, BA # 340780.

⁶⁵⁰ Paris, Musée du Louvre, G439, BA # 209566.

⁶⁵¹ Berlin, Antikensammlung, F2342, BA # 214183; Dresden, Staatl. Kunstsammlungen, Albertinum, 323, BA # 207775.

⁶⁵² New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 41.83, BA # 214160; Warsaw, National Museum, 140352, BA # 43394.

⁶⁵³ Attic examples of pig-headed companions: Boston (MA), Museum of Fine Arts, 99.518, BA # 302569; Berlin, Antikensammlung, F2342, BA # 214183; LIMC s.v. "Kirke" 17; Dresden, Staatl. Kunstsammlungen, Albertinum, 323, BA # 207775; New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 41.83, BA # 214160.

⁶⁵⁴ Some instances of Odysseus wearing a traveler's cap in Attic Kirke scenes: Athens, National Museum, Acropolis Coll., 2.293, BA # 203904; Erlangen, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität, 261, BA # 207587; New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 41.83, BA # 214160; Paris, Musée du Louvre, G439, BA # 209566; Warsaw, National Museum, 140352, BA # 43394.

Yet, though there are these similarities, the differences are also numerous, and most of them contribute to the caricaturistic effect of the Kabirion scenes. There is, of course, the different treatment of bodies: Kirke is turned into an ugly crone, quite different from the attractive goddess of the *Odyssey*, while Odysseus himself is transformed from a brave warrior into a someone who appears feeble in both mind and body. The change in posture of the companion in the London vase is similar, for, though he has a pig's head on a man's body, similar to the Attic examples, here he crouches on the ground, careless of his dignity, unlike the transformed companions on the Attic vases, who maintain an upright, human posture. The thorough-going nature of this caricature can also be seen in other details. Odysseus' kneeling posture in no. 402 (Mississippi, University of Mississippi P116) is quite interesting. On Attic vases, warriors often kneel in display or ambush, while revelers also kneel, sometimes in front of a krater, similar to Odysseus' kneeling before Kirke's cup, but in all of these examples, the kneeler puts only one knee to the ground.⁶⁵⁶ (fig. 8.9.29-30) Odysseus' posture, with both knees touching the ground, is more similar to representations of servants kneeling before their masters or

⁶⁵⁵ Her cup and wand appear for example on: Boston (MA), Museum of Fine Arts, 99.518, BA # 302569; Dresden, Staatl. Kunstsammlungen, Albertinum, 323, BA # 207775; New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 41.83, BA # 214160; Erlangen, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität, 261, BA # 207587; Paris, Musée du Louvre.

⁶⁵⁶ Warriors kneel, for example, on Basel, Antikenmuseum und Sammlung Ludwig, BS472, BA # 9919 and Florence, Museo Archeologico Etrusco, PD250, BA # 275967. Revelers: see Malibu (CA), The J. Paul Getty Museum, 86.AE.283, BA # 45426 and Basel, Antikenmuseum und Sammlung Ludwig, BS440, BA # 203338.

mourners kneeling before grave-markers.⁶⁵⁷ (fig. 8.9.31-32) In both of these cases, the two-knee kneeling is evidently meant to show the kneeler's humility. In the *Odyssey*, it is Kirke who kneels, beseeching Odysseus' mercy when he threatens her with his sword. By making Odysseus kneel, the Kabirion painter reversed this hierarchical relationship, portraying Odysseus as the weaker party, and even perhaps as the one desirous of a favor. What this favor might be seems to be suggested by another change made by the Kabirion painters, this time in Kirke's cup. This cup is of a normal size in the Attic scenes, but ranges from over-size to extremely large in the Kabirion examples. Perhaps we are to imagine that the caricatured Odysseus, instead of seeking to rescue his companions, is shown as desirous of Kirke's wine, adulterated or not. Such an interpretation would also account for Odysseus' conversational posture on the Oxford vase, where he seems to be negotiating with Kirke instead of threatening her. To make Odysseus into such a desperate imbibor is to employ an interesting burlesque tactic, that of removing a distinguishing narrative quality of an object in order to exploit its more comic every-day connotations. That is, while in the Homeric story, it is true that Kirke's potion is wine, its importance is in its additional, magical qualities – its ability to transform men into animals; however, the Kabirion burlesques emphasize its underlying, alcoholic nature, thus assimilating Odysseus to the many comic creations – satyrs and slaves in particular – who cannot drink enough of it, heedless of the result. Of course, Odysseus himself was often a character in comic poetry, and some fragments of comedies hint that literature also showed Odysseus distracted from his heroic duties, such as rescuing his companions

⁶⁵⁷ Kneeling servants: Chiusi, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, 1831, BA # 216789 and Berlin, Antikensammlung, F1855, BA # 320060. Kneeling mourners: Leipzig, Antikenmuseum d. Universität Leipzig, T3379, BA # 217770.

from the Cyclops, by wine.⁶⁵⁸ As well, the fragments of Epicharmos' *Sirens* indicate that the comic hero was strongly tempted by siren-songs about "roasting plump anchovies and sucking-pigs' meat and cuttlefish, and drinking sweet wine on top of it."⁶⁵⁹

One other difference also contributes to the de-mystification of the scene: the inclusion of the loom. Homer's account does place Kirke at the loom upon the first approach of Odysseus' companions, but no Attic representations of Kirke include it. There are looms in Attic vase-painting, but they occur exclusively in domestic scenes of mortal women.⁶⁶⁰ Though the Greeks frequently described their goddesses as adepts at or

⁶⁵⁸ The fragments of Odysseus' appearances in comic literature are discussed by E. D. Phillips, "The Comic Odysseus," *Greece & Rome*, 6.1 (1959), pp. 58-67. See also W. B. Stanford, "Studies in the Characterization of Ulysses," *Hermathena* (1949-55), especially "I. The Denigration of Odysseus," *Hermathena* (1949), pp. 34-36. Jokes about drinking feature in the fragments of Euripides' *Cyclops* as well as the few fragments of Epicharmos' play of the same name, on which see Phillips, "The Comic Odysseus," 61.

⁶⁵⁹ In another fragment, the Sirens describe their evening meal: "There was one fat red mullet, and two tunnies sliced through the middle, and as many pigeons and scorpion-fish." Phillips comments that "Odysseus suffers, not from unfathomable enchantment, but from plain gluttony unsatisfied in a fairyland of dainties." For these fragments, see Phillips, "The Comic Odysseus," 62. The same offers of banquets by the Sirens seem to have been part of Theopompos' *Sirens* - see Phillips, "The Comic Odysseus," 65 - as well as Nikophon's *Sirens*, where someone says "Let it snow barley and shower down loaves and rain soup, let meat-broth roll through the streets and cake call us to eat itself," and, in another fragment, "Let the sausage fight with the relish for a seat." Phillips, "The Comic Odysseus," 66. Kratinos' comic play about the Cyclops also featured the humor of gourmandizing heros, with the Cyclops announcing to Odysseus and his companions that "you sit there feeding on white milk, taking your portion of beestings and filling yourselves with beestings-pudding. Therefore I shall seize all of you 'dear companions' and roast you, boil you, and broil you on coals, dip you in brine and in vinegar-and-brine sauce and then in pickle of brine and garlic, and whichever of you seems the most tasty, I shall chew up, you warriors!" Phillips, "The Comic Odysseus," 64.

⁶⁶⁰ Attic domestic scenes with looms (some free-standing, some hand looms): Athens, National Museum, 2179, BA # 865; London, British Museum, 1907.5-19.1, BA # 1907.5-19.1; Cambridge (MA), Harvard Univ., Arthur M. Sackler Mus, 60.342; Durham, University, 3, BA # 9115; Paris, Musée du Louvre, CA1857, BA # 9599; London, British

even patrons of wool-working, it was apparently quite another thing, in the mind of Attic vase painters, to actually show them as engaged in such manual labor. That she is shown at her loom means that in the Kabirion burlesques, Kirke is caricatured not only through the changes in her physical appearance, but also through indications of a changed character – from fearful goddess to domestic shrew. The assertions of Moret, that Kirke as a weaver has an Orphic significance, are not believable; they are based on tenuous links to fragments of Orphic discourse about weaving and backed by the convenient assertion that “only the initiate can decipher the scene.”⁶⁶¹ A parodic interpretation is more satisfyingly comprehensive.

Museum, 1905.11-2.3, BA # 16212; Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, 3719, BA # 31334; Agrigento, Museo Archeologico Regionale, AG22276, BA # 31412; Athens, National Museum, Acropolis Coll., 1.2531, BA # 32237; Chicago (IL), Art Institute, 89.27, BA # 211642; Havana, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, 163, BA # 211643; Munich, Antikensammlungen, SL476, BA # 214538; Paris, Musée du Louvre, CA587, BA # 216046; Chiusi, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, 1831, BA # 216789; Stanford (CA), Stanford University, 17.412, BA # 275754; New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 31.11.10, BA # 310485. Several of these scenes also include men and youths, suggesting that the women are prostitutes: for example, Chicago (IL), Art Institute, 89.27, BA # 211642; Havana, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, 163, BA # 211643; Munich, Antikensammlungen, SL476, BA # 214538.

⁶⁶¹ Jean-Marc Moret, “Circé tisseuse sur les vases du Cabirion,” *RA* (1991), pp. 227-266. 233.

Odysseus Traveling

There is one Kabirion vase with a burlesque scene of Odysseus traveling:
Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, G249 (no inv. no. assigned in *KH* IV) (fig. 8.10.1)

Description:

On a craft made of two pointed amphorae, a grotesque Odysseus (large hips and belly, dangling phallos, wrinkled torso, large head, scruffy hair, large eyes), identified by an inscription.⁶⁶² He appears to be running, or at least has his legs spread. In one hand he holds a trident; the other arm is muffled in a cloak. Below the raft, two fish float on a row of stylized waves. At the upper right-hand corner, a grotesque head (scruffy hair, large eyes, prominent lips) puffs out its cheeks; another inscription identifies it as Boreas.

Reverse: Odysseus confronts Kirke (see section on “Odysseus and Kirke”).

⁶⁶² Bibliography: *KHI*, M16; LIMC s.v. “Odysseus,” 191 and s.v. “Kirke,” 32; Arthur Evans and Gardner, Percy. *Catalogue of the Greek Vases in the Ashmolean Museum*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1893. no. 262; Ettore Romagnoli, “Ninfe e Cabiri,” *Ausonia*, 2 (1907), pp. 141-184. 162; C.H. Johl, *Die Webstühle der Griechen und Römer*, Diss. Kiel 1917. 38; Ernst Pfuhl, *Malerei und Zeichnung der Griechen*. Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1923. fig. 615; Salomon Reinach, *Monuments nouveaux de l’art antique. Courriers de l’art antique de la Gazette des beaux-arts*. Paris: S. Kra, 1924-25. vol. 1, 197ff; Margarete Bieber, *Denkmäler zum Theaterwesen im Altertum*. Berlin: W. de Gruyter & Co., 1920. 154-155; Lapalus, “Parodies de thèmes héroïques,” 74-75; Constant Willem Lunsingh Scheurleer, *Grieksche Ceramiek*. Rotterdam: Nijgh & van Ditmar n.v., 1936. fig. 119; Margarete Bieber, *Griechische Kleidung*. Berlin and Leipzig: W. de Gruyter & Co., 1928. 3; Odette Touchefeu, *Thèmes Odysséens dans l’art antique*. Paris, E. de Boccard, 1968. 99-100, nr. 195; T. B. L. Webster, *Monuments Illustrating Old and Middle Comedy*, 3rd ed. London: Institute of Classical Studies, 1978. 61 BV 1; Lissarague, “Satyres, Sérieux S’Abstenir,” 109-110; Alexandre G. Mitchell. *Comic Pictures in Greek Vase-Painting: Humour in the Polis and the Dionysian World, in the Sixth and the Fifth Centuries B.C.* Thesis for D.Phil, School of Archeology, Oxford. Trinity Term, 2002. 167-169.

Discussion:

Scholars have usually identified this journey as the one Odysseus takes after leaving Kalypso, although this is perhaps not strictly necessary, since in the *Odyssey*, Boreas several other times aided or interfered with Odysseus's sailing.⁶⁶³ There are no representations of Odysseus traveling in surviving Attic art, but Wolters and Bruns suggested a comparison with certain Attic gemstones.⁶⁶⁴ (fig. 8.10.2-9) All these are figures sailing on amphora-rafts, either Erotes or a human figure who, when he holds a club, is identifiable as Herakles. These may be linked to the several Attic vases with scenes of Herakles sailing in a cup given to him by Helios.⁶⁶⁵ (fig. 8.10.10) This does not

⁶⁶³ Boreas appears in the *Odyssey* in episodes beginning with lines 5.295, 5.385, 9.67, 9.81, 10.507, and 14.253.

⁶⁶⁴ Adolf Furtwängler, *Antiken Gemmen: Geschichte der Steinschneidekunst im klassischen Altertum*. Leipzig, Berlin, Giesecke & Devrient, 1900. pl. 20.35: carnelian in Vienna; pl. 20.36: carnelian, coll. Carelli; pl. 20.37: carnelian, coll. Vidoni; pl. 20.38: carnelian, coll. Durand (upper body and head likely recarved); pl. 20.39: carnelian from Chiusi, coll. Pasquini; pl. 20.40: Carnelian in Berlin, inv. no. 231. Salomon Reinach, *Pierres gravées des collections Marlborough et d'Orléans, des recueils d'Eckhel, Gori, Lévesque de Gravelle, Mariette, Millin, Stosch*. Paris: Firmin-Didot et Cie, 1895. pl. 37. no. 77.1: red jasper, Mus. Bonar; 77.3: jasper, Mus. Bonar; 77.4: red jasper, Mus. Bonar.

⁶⁶⁵ Vatican City, Museo Gregoriano Etrusco Vaticano, 545, BA # 205336 and Boston (MA), Museum of Fine Arts, 03.783, BA # 302333. On this story, see Carlo Carena, "La Cosmologia di Talete e la coppa solare dei poeti ionici," *Rivista Rosminiana*, 56 (1962), pp. 22-32; Salvatore Settis, *Saggio sull'Afrodite Urania di Fidia*. Pisa: Nistri-Lischi, 1967. 67-72; Martin Robertson, "Geryoneis: Stesichorus and the Vase-Painters," *Classical Quarterly*, 19.2 (1969), pp. 207-221. 207-21; Giuseppe Giangrande, "Musaeus and the Voyage of the Sun," *Quaderni Urbinati*, 9 (1970), pp. 145-6; G. Karl Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme: The Adaptations of the Hero in Literature from Homer to the Twentieth Century*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1972. 20-21 and 252. Literary sources are collected in Giangrande; B. Wyss, *Antimachi Colophonii Reliquiae*, Berlin: Weidman, 1936. fr. 66; and Victor J. Matthews, Panyassis of Halikarnassos: Text and Commentary. Leiden: Brill, 1974. fr. 7K and 28, and Martin L. West, *Studies in Greek Elegy and Iambus*. Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1974. 175-6.

seem to have been the most serious of his adventures, and indeed, on both these cups and the gems, the mood seems to be light-hearted. It is likely that the Kabirion painter was aware of such Attic iconography, though we cannot know whether it was his idea to apply it to Odysseus or whether there were more apt models – we will again see the Kabirion painters’ adoption of Attic comic motifs. Thus we cannot be sure if the Odysseus scene is a parody of the journey of Herakles, or if they are both rather humorous stories. Perhaps in support of the latter option, there is also an Attic cup showing satyrs floating over the sea, riding on wineskins.⁶⁶⁶ One could also connect this image to the Attic tendency to visually play with the idea of a pot full of wine as being like a miniature sea – thus several known vases have waves or ships painted around their inner rims, or, like the psykter in New York with a dolphin-born chorus, are meant to bob their painted waves among the ripples of wine.⁶⁶⁷ The Kabirion painter’s similar appreciation of the “wine-dark sea” again demonstrates his links with Attic vase-painting.⁶⁶⁸ The painter also seems to have known the Attic tendency to depict Boreas

⁶⁶⁶ Paris, Louvre G92. On this cup, see François Lissarrague, *The Aesthetics of the Greek Banquet: Images of Wine and Ritual*. Trans. Andrew Szegedy. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991. 73.

⁶⁶⁷ Dolphin psykter: New York, NY, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989.281.69, BA # 275024. For a discussion of these vases, see M.I. Davis, “Sailing, Rowing, and Sporting in One’s Cup on the Wine-Dark Sea,” in *Athens Comes of Age: From Solon to Salamis: Papers of a Symposium Sponsored by the Archaeological Institute of America, Princeton Society and the Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University*. Princeton, N. J.: Archaeological Institute of America, 1978. pp. 72-95; W. Slater, “Symposium at Sea,” *HSCP* 80 (1976), pp. 161-170; W. Slater, “Peace, the Symposium and the Poet,” *ICS* 6 (1981), pp. 205-214; and Lissarrague, *Aesthetics of the Greek Banquet*, chapter on “Wine and the Wine-Dark Sea,” 107-122.

⁶⁶⁸ On Homer’s “wine-dark sea,” see D.H.F. Gray, “Homeric Epithets for Things,” *CQ*, 41 (1947), pp. 109-21, especially 109-113.

with stringy or spiky hair, as on the well-known vase by the Oreithyia Painter in Munich, c. 500-450 BCE.⁶⁶⁹ (fig. 10.10.11)

It is probably unwise to make too much of the cultic significance of this isolated sea-scene, but it is true that Demeter and Poseidon are often linked in cult. For example, they were both worshipped at the sanctuary of Poseidon at Isthmia.⁶⁷⁰

⁶⁶⁹ Munich, Antikensammlungen, J376, BA # 206422.

⁶⁷⁰ Two dedications to Demeter from the 4th c. BCE were found near the temple of Poseidon at Isthmia – see Oscar Broneer, *Topography and Architecture, Isthmia*, vol. 2. Princeton, NJ: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1973. 113; and Mary C. Sturgeon, *Sculpture I: 1952-1967, Isthmia*, vol. 4. Princeton, NJ: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1987. 116. Demeter and Poseidon are also mentioned together by Paus. 1.38.6, 8.10.1, 8.37.1-12, 8.25.4-6, 8.42.1-3, and Plutarch, *Quaest. Conviv.* 4.4.3. This evidence is discussed by Elizabeth R. Gebhard, “The evolution of a pan-Hellenic sanctuary: from archaeology towards history at Isthmia,” in *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches*. Ed. Nanno Marinatos and Robin Hägg. London and New York: Routledge, 1995. pp. 154-177. 154, n. 4.

Pygmies and Cranes

There are five Kabirion vases which could be show pygmies battling cranes:

no. 324 (Athens, Nat. Mus., 10530) (fig. 8.11.1)

no. 355 (Berlin, Staatliche Mus., 3179) (fig. 8.11.2)

no.354 (Berlin, Staatliche Mus., 3159) (fig. 8.11.3)

no. 299 (Athens, NM 12880) (fig. 8.11.4)

no. 399 (London, BM B77) (fig. 8.11.5)

Description:

no. 324 (Athens, Nat. Mus., 10530) (fig. 8.11.1)

There are two joinable fragments remaining from this side of the cup.⁶⁷¹ On the left, a grotesque male figure (short, with pudgy limbs, balding, large eyes and mouth) holds out a cloak towards a non-grotesque crane (long neck, large wingspan). A straight stroke of paint may indicate a dropped weapon. To the right, another grotesque male figure (short, with pudgy limbs, dangling phallos, frontal face, large eyes and mouth) sprawls on the ground, stretching a crane's neck between his hands, preparing to bite it.

Reverse: Pegasus, Bellerophon, and the Chimera (see section on the "Chimera" for discussion).

⁶⁷¹ Bibliography: *KH I M* 29; H. Winnefeld, "Das Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben, III, Die Vasenfunde," *AM*, 13 (1888), pp. 412-428. 421-422; Ettore Romagnoli, "Ninfe e Cabiri," *Ausonia*, 2 (1907), pp. 141-184. on Kabirion ware, see pp. 159-163. 160-162; Lapalus, "Parodies de thèmes héroïques," 78-82; Alexandre G. Mitchell. *Comic Pictures in Greek Vase-Painting: Humour in the Polis and the Dionysian World, in the Sixth and the Fifth Centuries B.C.* Thesis for D.Phil, School of Archeology, Oxford. Trinity Term, 2002. 166.

no. 355 (Berlin, Staatliche Mus., 3179) (fig. 8.11.2)

On the left, a grotesque male figure (oversized head, large eyes, protruding jaw) lunges forward, apparently about to throw some sort of weapon, of which only a short straight element in his thrown-back hand survives.⁶⁷² Before him, at least two birds springing into flight. Reverse: parodies of athletes: a runner and pairs of boxers and wrestlers shown with grotesque, phallic bodies.

no.354 (Berlin, Staatliche Mus., 3159) (fig. 8.11.3)

Four pygmy and crane duels continue around both sides of this cup.⁶⁷³ The figures are shown with the same general type of grotesque body (puny limbs, oversized, wrinkled belly, dangling phallos, scanty hair, sloping forehead, large eyes, pug nose, protruding lips). On one side, to the left, two pygmies battle a single crane, which is perched on the back of a bent-over pygmy with his cloak muffling his head. The crane is apparently engaged in sticking its beak into this pygmy's anus (compare to the joke of Ajax's sword – see "Ilioupersis"). His fellow, wearing a traveler's hat and with a cloak draped over his arm, holds the end of the crane's wing in one hand and prepares to hit it with the club held in his other hand. At the right, another pygmy, completely nude, squats on a bit of

⁶⁷² Bibliography: *KHI*, K 16; Bruno Schröder, *Der Sport im Altertum*. Berlin: H. Schoetz, 1927. 81; Carl Blümel, *Sport der Hellenen, Ausstellung Griechischer Bildwerke*. Berlin: Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 1936. 37, 121; Walter Herwig Schuchhardt, *Die Kunst der Griechen. Geschichte der Kunst Altertum*, vol. 1. Berlin: Rembrandt Verlag, 1940. 364; Gottfried von Lücken, *Griechische Vasenbilder in Wien*. Vienna: Ed. Hölzel [n.d.]. pl. 30.

⁶⁷³ Bibliography: *KHI*, M 7.

rising ground, indicated by dotted paint. He bites the neck of a small crane, as on the Athens cup, though here, a larger crane prepares to intervene. On the other side of the cup, on the left, a more fully-clothed pygmy rides towards a crane on a rearing mule, wielding an elaborate spear. To the right, a pygmy with a similar spear, wearing a traveler's hat, a scabbard, and with a cloak over his arm, aims for a large crane, while a smaller crane directs its beak towards the pygmy's dangling phallos.

no. 299 (Athens, NM 12880) (fig. 8.11.4)

Between two cranes, a very grotesque pygmy (pudgy limbs, oversized, wrinkled belly, large head, bulging forehead, large eyes, pug nose, gaping mouth), shown from the back, wields a club, wearing a cloak wrapped around his other arm.⁶⁷⁴ Reverse: floral decoration.

no. 399 (London, BM B77) (fig. 8.11.5)

A grotesque male figure (puny limbs, humped back, dangling phallos) runs with arms outstretched towards a small bird.⁶⁷⁵ The bird is similar to the small crane with closed wings on the Berlin vase, but its neck is not quite so long, and the figure is larger

⁶⁷⁴ Bibliography: *KH* I, M8.

⁶⁷⁵ Bibliography: *KH* I, M 17; Paul V.C. Baur, *Centaur in Ancient Art: The Archaic Period*. Berlin: K. Curtius, 1912. 61 no. 167; K. Friis Johansen, "Achill bei Chiron," in *Dragma*, Martino P. Nilsson. Lund: H. Ohlsson, 1939. pp. 181-205. 204-205; Birgitt Schiffler, *Die Typologie des Kentauren in der antiken Kunst: vom 10. bis zum Ende d. 4. Jhs. v. Chr.* Frankfurt and Bern: Lang, 1976. 276 no. B6; T. B. L. Webster. *Monuments Illustrating Old and Middle Comedy*. London: Institute of Classical Studies, 1978. 19; Alexandre G. Mitchell. *Comic Pictures in Greek Vase-Painting: Humour in the Polis and the Dionysian World, in the Sixth and the Fifth Centuries B.C.* Thesis for D.Phil, School of Archeology, Oxford. Trinity Term, 2002. 169-170.

than it in more that the usual proportion of the heights of pygmies to cranes on other Kabirion vases. It is thus difficult to know whether to identify this scene as a pygmy and crane, though no other striking possibility occurs. Reverse: Chiron, Peleus, and Achilles (see section on “Chiron Receiving Achilles” for discussion).

Other Kabirion vases of interest:

Almost all of the Kabirion burlesque scenes are populated by pygmy- or dwarf-like figures, most notably, Bellerophon, Kadmus, Kephalos, and the possible Zeus figure. Some other examples and fragments are here illustrated, since they will contribute to the discussion of Kabirion, Attic, and South Italian grotesque body types:

no. 302 (Athens, NM, 10426) (fig. 8.11.6)

no. 320 (Athens, NM, 10530) (fig. 8.11.7)

no. 313 (Athens, NM, 10530) (fig. 8.11.8)

no. 397 (St. Petersburg, Hermitage, B105) (fig. 8.11.9)

no. 322 (Athens, NM, no inv. no.) (fig. 8.11.10)

no. 290 (Athens, NM, 426) (fig. 8.11.11)

no. 319 (Athens, NM, 10530) (fig. 8.11.12)

Discussion:

A close examination of the Kabirion pygmy scenes should be made, since in Attica, too, pygmies and cranes were sometimes (if not always) also regarded as a humorous subject, and thus the similarities and difference of Attic and Kabirion humor

will become clearer.⁶⁷⁶ In black-figure, Attic pygmies are shown as perfect manikins, with normal bodies.⁶⁷⁷ (fig. 8.11.13) On the foot of the François krater, one such manikin pygmy rides a goat – the only parallel, although too early to be a probable model, for the mule-riding Kabirion pygmy. In red-figure, from the early 5th c. BCE, there is a change in both iconography and schema. (fig. 8.11.14-20) Instead of battle scenes with multiple pygmies, there is a preference, maintained for the remaining history of the iconography, for scenes of individual duels, with a single pygmy and one or more cranes. The pygmies are now shown as natural dwarfs, usually of the achondroplastic type (due to abnormal formation of cartilage) with large heads, short limbs, and large genitals (this last is a feature, at least, in the popular imagination; in actuality, there is variation). There are examples of such scene into the 4th c. BCE, in Kersch-ware.⁶⁷⁸ (fig. 8.11.21-23) There are no surviving South Italian versions of the battle of pygmies and cranes. The most usual equipment for the Attic pygmies is rather primitive - a club in one hand and a cloak muffling one arm as a shield, though sometimes they carry swords or other hoplite

⁶⁷⁶ For Attic representations of pygmies: LIMC, s.v. “Pygmaioi”; Véronique Dasen, *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993; R. Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*; Hoffmann, *Sotades*, 28, 165, n. 22; Brian A. Sparkes, “Small World: Pygmies and co.” in *Word and Image in Ancient Greece*, ed. N. Keith Rutter and Brian Sparkes. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000. pp. 79-98.

⁶⁷⁷ For example, on New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 26.49, BA # 300770 and Florence, Museo Archeologico Etrusco, 4209, BA # 300000.

⁶⁷⁸ In the 5th c. BCE: Athens, Agora Museum, P2574, BA # 6111; Athens, National Museum, 17714, BA # 29108; Paris, Musée du Louvre, TH16, BA # 47067; Brussels, Musées Royaux, R302, BA # 213557; Prague, Museum of Applied Arts, Z260.1K18, BA # 21358; Vatican City, Museo Gregoriano Etrusco Vaticano, 35072, BA # 21359. End of 5th c. BCE: Ruvo, Museo Jatta, 1408, BA # 218716; St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, B1818, BA # 204087. In the 4th c. BCE: St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, P1836.I; Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, 3221, BA # 11175; St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, P1877.64.

weapons. Attic painters seem to have been occasionally struck by the similarities of the pygmies' outfit and pugnacious tendencies to those of Herakles, and so at times transform the cloak into a lion-skin and the pygmy into a parody of this most large of heroes.⁶⁷⁹ (fig. 8.11.15)

In red-figure, Attic pygmies are rarely bested by cranes, although their fortunes do seem to be turning in the 4th c. BCE examples. In showing more embattled pygmies, and also in grouping together more pygmies and cranes into larger battle scenes, the Kabirion painters again display their curious similarity to the aims of Attic black-figure painters, as with the Judgment of Paris scenes; again, though, there has been a definite attention of the new style, shown here in the tendency to compose even larger scenes into individual duels or small groups. There is no surviving reference to Herakles or other specific heroes. The horse-riding pygmy is most probably more a burlesque of the everyday Greek hunter, rather than any heroic personage, since it is almost always mortals, not deities, who are shown hunting or making war from horseback in Greek art. If the Kabirion painters could show pygmies as comic humans, they were also delighted by pygmies who acted in a more bestial manner – hence the Kabirion pygmies who abandon even their crude weapons in order to bite the cranes. It is notable that one vase, no.354 (Berlin, Staatliche Mus., 3159), contrasts on its two sides both the over- and the under-civilized pygmies; evidently, painters were well-aware of this technique of pygmy humor. The same vase adds another comic turn not seen in the surviving Attic examples

⁶⁷⁹ The resemblance is most striking on Brussels, Musées Royaux, R302, BA # 213557, on which see Dasen, *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece*, 187; Hoffmann, *Sotades*, 28, 165, n. 22; Sparkes, "Small World," 92; Mitchell, *Comic Pictures in Greek Vase-Painting*, 122.

by having the cranes attack the pygmies' genitals. Jokes of the same sort are frequent in Attic Old Comedy, if not on Attic vases; in any case, the Attic painter's interest in prominent or deformed pygmy genitals is evident, even if they are brought to no harm, especially on the rhyton in St. Petersburg – which also features the Attic pygmy who, by sticking his sword into a crane's undefended rump, comes the closest to the more brutal Kabirion examples.⁶⁸⁰ (fig. 8.11.20)

⁶⁸⁰ St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, B1818, BA # 204087.

Theseus and the Sow

There is one Kabirion vase that can be identified as a burlesque of Theseus' encounter with the Krommyonian Sow:

363 Bonn, Akademisches Kunstmus., 1768. (fig. 8.9.11)

For discussion of this vase, see section on "Odysseus and Kirke."

II. Unidentifiable or Non-mythological Scenes

Chained Men

One Kabirion vase has a scene with chained men that may be mythological:
no. 390 (Kassel, Staatliche Kunstslg, Leihgabe Slg. Ludwig, Aachen), c. 420 BCE. (fig. 8.13.1)

Description:

On the far left, a somewhat grotesque (stooped body, large forehead and eyes) female *aulos*-player.⁶⁸¹ Facing her, a naked grotesque male figure (puny limbs, protruding buttocks, wrinkled torso, dangling phallos, large forehead, prominent nose), holding a staff in one hand and with the other outstretched in a gesture (supplication?). His ankles are chained together, but he attempts to move – running or dancing seem the most probably options. The next figure is another grotesque male of the same description, though with white, bushy hair, indicating that he is older. He is chained by one ankle to a block of some sort; another line runs from his hands to this chain – is he also chained by the hands? He looks to the right, where there is another grotesque male figure who holds up a torch. Reverse: burlesque *Ilioupersis* scene (see section on “*Ilioupersis*.”)

⁶⁸¹ Bibliography: *LIMC*, “Helene,” 290; Ars Antiqua AG Luzern, Auction IV, 7 Dec. 1962, nr. 139, pl. 49 (K. Schauenbug); A. Seeberg, “A Boston Fragment with a Prisoner,” *BICS*, 14 (1967), pp. 25-35. 28-29; Reinhard Lullies, *Aachener Kunstblätter*, 37 (1968) = *Griechische Kunstwerke Sammlung Ludwig, Aachen*. 132-133, nr. 54; Ernst Berger and Reinhard Lullies, eds. *Antike Kunstwerke aus der Sammlung Ludwig: Katalog und Einzeldarstellungen*. Basel: Archäologischer Verlag and Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1979. 86-88, no. 32; Alexandre G. Mitchell. *Comic Pictures in Greek Vase-Painting: Humour in the Polis and the Dionysian World, in the Sixth and the Fifth Centuries B.C.* Thesis for D.Phil, School of Archeology, Oxford. Trinity Term, 2002. 166-67.

Discussion:

This scene is clearly narrative and yet, despite the seeming abundance of details, difficult to interpret. Are the men captives? But captives are usually shown with arms bound by ropes, and usually as being taken from one place to another, not in stationary captivity.⁶⁸² (fig. 8.13.2) Prometheus is bound in one place, but, of course, is without a companion. The ankle chains more likely identify the men as slaves, like the little grotesque slave on an Attic vase in Leiden, c. 525-475 BCE.⁶⁸³ (fig. 8.13.3) The fondness of Greek comedy – theatrical and, one may assume, otherwise – for recalcitrant slaves makes it likely that this scene is related to one such story, and is not mythological.⁶⁸⁴ Seeberg has linked the scene to a Corinthian and several other Boeotian vases showing comic, usually phallic, prisoners or slaves.⁶⁸⁵ (fig. 8.13.4-6) If not related to the same story, they illustrate the same genre of comic slave-stories, which seems by this evidence to have been popular enough in Boeotia to have made reasonable the Kabirion painter's choice to pair it with his burlesqued Iliupersis. It is interesting that the *aulos*-player, an arguably theatrical element (see Introduction), appears only here, in a non-mythological

⁶⁸² For example, as is Silenos on a vase, c. 475-425 BCE. London, British Museum, 1851.4-16.9, BA # 213470.

⁶⁸³ Leiden, Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, K94.9.15, BA # 768.

⁶⁸⁴ Aeschylus' satyr play *Theoroi* had a final scene of Dionysos threatening to chain up the satyrs, which may have parodied serious myths of prisoners in the same way that this scene seems to be parodying some myth or story: see Massimo Di Marco, "Sul finale dei *Theoroi* di Eschilo," *Eikasmos* (1992), pp. 93-104.

⁶⁸⁵ A. Seeberg, "A Boston Fragment with a Prisoner," *BICS*, 14 (1967), pp. 25-35. Boston, MFA, 13.96; Athens, NM, 442; once Leipzig University, T326.

scene, making this scene different from the Kabirion mythological burlesques and more similar to the South Italian phylax vases.

Deity(?) on Horseback

There is a fragment of a Kabirion vase that Braun has suggested may be a burlesque representation of a deity:

no. 92 (Thebes, Mus., K3063) (fig. 8.14.1)

Description:

On the back of a quadruped, most of whose head and body are not preserved, reclines a grotesque (puny limbs large head), half-draped, male figure, playing the harp. To the right, part of a calyx-krater.

Discussion:

Braun identifies the animal as probably a horse, and the figure as a burlesqued deity, either Apollo or Herakles. The lines indicating the shoulder and cheek are very similar to those on representations of mules in Kabirion ware, and the animal should probably be identified as such.⁶⁸⁶ (fig. 8.15.2) As for the rider, there are several Attic examples of reveling deities riding mules, most usually Dionysos, but sometimes Dionysos and a companion, as on a stamnos by the Berlin Painter, c. 525-475 BCE, on one side of which Dionysos, holding a kantharos, reclines on a goat, while on the other Hermes, with kantharoi, reclines on a ram; by Hermes stands a satyr holding a bell-krater, possibly explaining the lofted calyx-krater in the Kabirion scene.⁶⁸⁷ (fig. 8.15.3) Since the

⁶⁸⁶ Compare to no. 388 (Karlsruhe, Badisches Landesmuseum, B 2596, BA # 12507).

⁶⁸⁷ Paris, Musée du Louvre, CA944, BA # 201961.

general theme of such scenes is revelry, it is probable that the lyre is present simply as an instrument of merriment rather than as an identifying attribute of a deity; thus, it is difficult to ascertain the identity of the Kabirion rider, or even if he is a deity at all. A closer model is provided by several Boeotian terracotta figurines which show satyrs reclining back to front on mules.⁶⁸⁸

⁶⁸⁸ Boston, MFA, 01.8011: an ithyphallic satyr playing the double flute reclining back to front on a mule, mid. 6th c. BCE. J. S. Oestergaard, "Terracotta Horses and Horsemen of Archaic Boeotia", *Acta Hyperborea* 3 (1991), pp. 111-189. p. 153, fig. 61. The same subject appears on another Boeotian terracotta figurine from the 3rd c. BCE in a private collection in the USA (W. Rudolph and A. Calinescu, *Ancient Art from the V.G. Simkovitsch Collection*. Bloomington: Indiana University Art Museum in association with Indiana University Press, 1988. p. 166 no. 161. There is also a Boeotian terracotta, c. 500 BCE, of a satyr riding, in a more normal fashion, a mule: Boston, MFA 08.290, published in *AntK* 7 (1964), 69-70, pl. 21.2.

Fight Before a Gate

There is one Kabirion vase that might show a burlesqued mythological combat:
no. 365 (Boston, MFA, 99532) (fig. 8.15.1)

Description:

At the far left, a closed gate or elaborate door.⁶⁸⁹ The rest of the field is taken up by three figures. On the left, a naked grotesque man (long, thin limbs, prominent buttocks, dangling phallos, stooped posture, large eyes, prominent nose, open mouth) stretches out his hands in a gesture – of pleading or supplication? To the right, a duel of two grotesque men of the same type, wearing short chitons, one holding a shield, the other wearing a scabbard. Between them stands a bird. Reverse: two grotesque men of the same type, holding vegetal wands, with a bird between them, and another grotesque figure in longer draperies, holding a staff.

Webster compares this scene to his mask type B (good head of hair, short beard, open trumpet mouth).⁶⁹⁰ (fig. 8.15.2)

Discussion:

⁶⁸⁹ Bibliography: *KHI*, M 34; Arthur Fairbanks. *Catalogue of Greek and Etruscan Vases*. Cambridge, Mass.: Published for the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, by the Harvard University Press, 1928. Vol 1, nr. 563, pl. 69; T. B. L. Webster. *Monuments Illustrating Old and Middle Comedy*. London: Institute of Classical Studies, 1978. 20.

⁶⁹⁰ T. B. L. Webster. *Monuments Illustrating Old and Middle Comedy*. London: Institute of Classical Studies, 1978. 20.

Bruns thinks that this scene might be mythological, perhaps Trojan or from the story of the Seven against Thebes. Gates and doors do appear in Attic vase-painting, but almost exclusively in domestic scenes.⁶⁹¹ There is only one surviving representation of a battle scene with a gate – that of Troy, on a black-figure vase by the Leagros Group, c. 550-500 BCE.⁶⁹² If the Kabirion scene is a mythological duel, its painter either made changes to the iconography or, perhaps, was influenced by mural painting. The duel itself is rather generic, besides that the pleading bystander makes one think of Priam, though there is no indication that he is older than the others. The bird between the duelists' feet offers the possibility that it is the object of their dispute, and the scene would thus be similar to a stamnos in Basel, c. 470 BCE, on which two warriors quarrel over a ram (who is labeled "Pat...", presumably "Patroklos").⁶⁹³ (fig. 8.15.3) The placement of this bird may not be so meaningful, despite the Kabirion painters' usual lack of filler motifs, since a similar bird appears on the reverse of the vase. Perhaps, like the Kabirion vase in Chicago, there is little possibility of identifying the story.⁶⁹⁴ (fig. 8.15.4)

⁶⁹¹ For example: Paris, Musée du Louvre, G541, BA # 11287; Bonn, Akademisches Kunstmuseum, 84A, BA # 204245; Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, 3719, BA # 31334. Doors also can appear in myths involving women, for example, Clytemnestra on Berlin, Antikensammlung, F2301, BA # 204027, or the Lapiths and Centaurs, on Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, 1026, BA # 214586.

⁶⁹² Munich, Antikensammlungen, 1700, BA # 302022.

⁶⁹³ Basel, Antikenmuseum, BS 477, BA # 203796.

⁶⁹⁴ Chicago, University of Chicago 1967.115.165. no inv. no. assigned in *KH IV*.

Herakles(?) Reclining

There is an additional Kabirion vase which might represent Herakles:

no. 298 (Athens, NM, 12547) (fig. 8.16.1)

Description:

To the left, a bounding fox; to the right, a grotesque male figure (puny limbs, large belly, dangling phallos) on its back, holding a club in one hand.⁶⁹⁵ The figure seems to be reclining, with its elbow on an object, indicated by dots within outlines, behind its head; this could be a rock or a pillow. Reverse: a grotesque hunter runs after a fox.

In Attic art, Herakles is sometimes shown reclining in a rural setting; like the Kabirion figure, he is usually nude and retains his identifying club; however, he almost always has at least one companion, and always servitors, and usually enlivens his banquet with many pillows and much crockery, as on a cup, now in London, from c. 460 BCE.⁶⁹⁶ (fig. 8.16.2) Thus, the Kabirion figure is not likely to be Herakles, especially since similar clubs are the property of other hunters and travelers on Kabirion vases. Perhaps he is meant as a continuation of or comparison with the Kephalos of the other side of the vase, in order to demonstrate that luck, and foxes, desert a lazy hunter.

⁶⁹⁵ Bibliography: *KHI*, K 7; Maxime Collignon and Louis Couve, *Catalogue des vases peints du Musée national d'Athènes*. Bibliothèque des Ecoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, fasc. 85 Paris: Fontemoing, 1902., no. 957.

⁶⁹⁶ London, British Museum, E66, BA # 209980. See *LIMC* s.v. "Herakles" 1483-1507 and also Thomas H Carpenter, *Dionysian Imagery in Archaic Greek Art: Its Development in Black-figure Vase Painting*. Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press, 1986. 111-115.

Men in a Boat

There is one Kabirion vase with a scene of men riding in a boat which might be mythological:

Berlin, Staatliche Mus., V.I. 3263. no inv. no. in *KH* IV. (fig. 8.17.1)

Description:

On a wavy sea, a boat with a pointed prow with three riders.⁶⁹⁷ Two stars above. The riders wear traveler's hats, and are painted in silhouette, so that it is difficult to tell if they are meant to be grotesque or not. Reverse: a non-grotesque Nereid, riding a hippocampus, carrying a drinking cup and a box (see section on "The Arms of Achilles").

Discussion:

This scene has been tentatively linked with the Dioskouroi, who could be identified as either the sailors or the stars.⁶⁹⁸ It is difficult to parallel this imagery in Attic iconography. In any case, the scene does not seem to be a burlesque, both because the non-grotesque style of the Nereid on the reverse suggests that these figures, too, should not be read of grotesques, and also because there are no details that suggest a changed, comic iconography.

⁶⁹⁷ Bibliography: *KH* I, M 20; *LIMC*, s.v. "Nereides," 25; Waldemar Gang, *Nereiden auf Sietieren*. Weimar: Borkmann, 1907. 8.

⁶⁹⁸ *LIMC*, s.v. "Dioskouroi."

Ogress

There is one Kabirion vase with a scene of a man fleeing from an ogress:
no. 401 (London, private coll.) (fig. 8.19.1)

Description:

On the left, a female creature, whose body, except for the breasts and face, is covered with hair, as indicated by dotted paint.⁶⁹⁹ She runs to the right, stretching out her large hands. The head is only somewhat grotesque (large eyes, pug nose). From her runs a much smaller grotesque male figure (puny limbs, oversized torso, dangling phallos, pointy nose), wearing only a traveler's hat. Between them lies his baggage yoke, with a clock wrapped around the carrying surface; compare Kadmus' dropped baggage. To the right, a thin tree in which two other grotesque male figures (puny limbs, large heads) have taken refuge. There is an object beneath the tree; Levi suggests either a herm or, more likely, a plow. Reverse: grotesque reveler with three grotesque women (see section on "Judgment of Paris.")

Other Kabirion vases of interest:

There is a fragment of a Kabirion vase which also represents a hairy, chasing monster: no. 383 (Heidelberg, University, S155). (fig. 8.19.2) Here, though, the face is

⁶⁹⁹ Bibliography: Peter Levi, "A Kabirion Vase," *JHS*, 84 (1964), pp. 155-156.

fully animal, and so it is perhaps a different kind of monster than that shown on the ogress vase.⁷⁰⁰

Discussion:

It is difficult to identify this scene. The only Greek hero to have been painted chased up a tree is Peleus, after Akastos hid his sword, but he is threatened by ordinary wild animals, not ogresses.⁷⁰¹ (fig. 8.19.3) Levi despairs of identifying the story, suggesting that it was a local myth, and perhaps that the chased man here is the same as the man frightened by a snake on no. 356 (Berlin, Staatliche Mus., 3284). The Kabirion Painter was able to make scenes without the use of Attic models (see the discussion of his Kephalos burlesque); thus, this scene could be such an illustration of an unknown myth, or could simply be an original creation of a painter who shows himself elsewhere fond of scenes of animals attacking men, for example on no. 379 (Dresden, Skulpturenslg., ZV1210). Perhaps he was thinking of the several Greek female monsters with animal bodies and human faces, especially those, like the Sphinx and the Lamia, with sexual interest in men.⁷⁰²

⁷⁰⁰ Bibliography: KH I, K 45; William Coffman McDermott, *The Ape in Antiquity*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1938. nr. 324; Bernhard Neutsch, ed. *Die Welt der Griechen: im Bilde der Originale der Heidelberger Universitätssammlung: Katalog der Jubiläumsausstellung zur 100-Jahr-Feier der Sammlungen des Archäologischen Instituts Heidelberg im Sommersemester 1948*. Heidelberg: F.H. Kerle, 1948. 60.

⁷⁰¹ Apollod., 3.13.3. A treed Peleus appears on: New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 46.11.7, BA # 320454; and Rome, Mus. Naz. Etrusco di Villa Giulia, 24247, BA # 13074. See Marjorie J. Milne, "Peleus and Akastos," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, 5.10 (1947), pp. 255-260; and Mitchell, 69.

⁷⁰² For a discussion of the Lamia and for depictions on Attic black-figure vases, which are probably too early to serve as comparisons, see Emily T. Vermeule, "Herakles Brings

Phallos Bird

Wolters and Brun suggested that one Kabirion vase fragment shows a partial phallos bird:

no. 359 (Berlin, Staatliche Mus., 3316) (fig. 8.20.1)

Description:

The vase, from which three fragments survive, features at least two nude, somewhat grotesque revelers.⁷⁰³ One appears to be riding something; the preserved long ears on the right edge of the fragment suggest a mule, although it is possible that he is riding the phallos bird. The third fragment shows something ridden on by what seems to be another human reveler, judging by the feet and legs. Wolters and Brun reconstructed the mount as a phallos bird; however, the inscribed line is better interpreted as the shoulder-line of a lion or mule or another type of non-mythological mount.⁷⁰⁴

a Tribute,” in *Festschrift für Frank Brommer*, ed. Ursula Höckmann and Antje Krug. Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1977. pp. 295-301.

⁷⁰³ Bibliography: *KH I*, K 8.

⁷⁰⁴ My gratitude for Francesco De Angelis, who drew these alternate reconstructions to my attention.

Prometheus(?)

There is one Kabirion fragment which Braun has suggested shows a grotesque Prometheus:

no. 155 (*KH* IV, pl. 4.12) (fig. 8.21.1)

Description:

The fragment in question shows the head and upper body of a grotesque figure (puny arm, large head, large eyes) facing another figure of whom nothing is preserved except a long, upraised arm which seems to be bound at the wrist. Other fragments from the same vase show other figures, but not much survives.

Discussion:

Braun suggested an identification of this figure as Prometheus, but this is an optimistic reading. Prometheus is usually shown in Attic art with his arms bound behind his back or at his sides, only slightly elevated.⁷⁰⁵ Even if the Kabirion figure were bound like Prometheus, in the absence of details, it is more probable that this is a mortal, non-mythological figure, perhaps a punished slave.

⁷⁰⁵ For example, on an Apulian oinochoe, Princeton (NJ), University Art Museum, 1989.30, c. 340-330 BCE, or an Apulian krater, Berlin, Staat. Mus. 1969.9, c. 350-340 BCE.

Zeus(?)

There is one Kabirion hunting scene with a hunter who might be identified as a grotesque Zeus:

no. 387 (Heidelberg, University, 190) (fig. 8.22.1)

Description:

On the left, a grotesque male figure (puny limbs, large torso, protruding buttocks, large head, large forehead, large eyes, prominent nose, gaping mouth) runs forward; he is nude except for a cloak wrapped around one arm.⁷⁰⁶ In the other hand, he holds a weapon. In the middle of the scene, stylized vegetation – a tree? – with several garlands tied to it. At the right, a boar flees.

Discussion:

From the fleeing animal and the cloak muffling his arm, it is clear that the figure is a hunter. From his posture and elaborate weapon, it is somewhat tempting to identify him as Zeus, but after consideration, this is dubious. His weapon, though it has a strangely wavy end, is much the same in its blade as the spears held by pygmies on another vase by the Mystes Painter.⁷⁰⁷ (fig. 8.22.2) The weapon is far less similar to the elaborate, two-

⁷⁰⁶ Bibliography: KH I, M15; Bernhard Neutsch, ed. *Die Welt der Griechen: im Bilde der Originale der Heidelberger Universitätsammlung: Katalog der Jubiläumsausstellung zur 100-Jahr-Feier der Sammlungen des Archäologischen Instituts Heidelberg im Sommersemester 1948*. Heidelberg: F.H. Kerle, 1948. 32, nr. 31.

⁷⁰⁷ no. 354 (Berlin, Staatliche Mus., 3159).

edged affairs that represent Zeus' lightning bolt. The vast majority of the examples of representations of blitz discussed and illustrated by Jacobsthal are double-headed; moreover, the majority have not a single point but multiple petal-like point, as on an vase in Paris, c. 475-425 BCE.⁷⁰⁸ (fig. 8.22.3) The figure is thus far more likely an ordinary grotesque hunter, thus confirming the Kabirion tendency to burlesque whole scenes from the Attic iconography, not merely individual figures.

⁷⁰⁸ Paris, Musée du Louvre, AM341, BA # 10877. Paul Jacobsthal, *Der Blitz in der orientalischen und griechischen Kunst*. Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1906. For other examples of Zeus' posture and lightning bolt in Attic art, see *LIMC*, s.v. "Zeus"; Daniel Aebli, *Klassischer Zeus: ikonologische Probleme der Darstellung vom Mythem im 5. Jahrhundert v. Chr.* Munich: Dissertationsdruck Schön, 1971; K.W. Arafat, *Classical Zeus: A Study in Art and Literature*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.

III. Non-grotesque Mythological Scene

Arms of Achilles

There is one Kabirion vase, a stamnos-pyxis, that shows Thetis and Nereids carrying the arms of Achilles:

Paris, Louvre, CA 791 (4502). no inv. no. assigned in *KH* IV. c. 425-400 BCE (fig. 8.23.1)

Description:

The scene runs all the way around the vase, with bands decorated by birds and filler-motifs above and below.⁷⁰⁹ There are five Nereids, two riding dolphins, two hippocamps, and one a more dragonish sea-creature. Thetis may or may not be present; if so, she is difficult to distinguish, unless it is she on the unique mount, or carrying the cuirass. The others carry a sword in a scabbard, a helmet, a shield, and a spear. The Nereids all have flowing veils and heavy drapery. Their bodies and features have non-grotesque proportions (fitting limbs, non-protuberant bellies, straight posture, normal eyes and lips).

Other relevant Kabirion vases:

There is another Kabirion vase, an amphoriskos of an unusual shape, which shows on one side a Nereid, riding a hippocamp, carrying objects:

⁷⁰⁹ Bibliography: *KH* I, M 19; *LIMC*, s.v. "Nereides," 339; Judith M. Barringer, *Divine Escorts: Nereids in Archaic and Classical Greek Art*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995. 40-41.

Berlin, Staatliche Mus., V.I. 3263. no inv. no. assigned in *KH* IV. (fig. 8.23.2)

Wolters and Bruns grouped this scene with the Paris vase, but were not certain that it was of the same subject.⁷¹⁰ This Nereid carries a drinking cup and a box, neither of which are usual in the iconography of the arms of Achilles; there not even enough connection to this iconography to make the scene a parody of it.

Discussion:

Scenes of Nereids assisting the arming of Achilles appear early in Attic vase-painting, c. 570-560 BCE, and continues in popularity through the classical period.⁷¹¹ In archaic vase-painting, a standing warrior receives weapons from standing Nereids.⁷¹² (fig. 8.23.3) This iconography continues into red-figure, but there also appears another iconography, with scenes of traveling Nereids, bearing armor and riding on sea-animals, appear; it is sometimes claimed that this iconography was inspired by Aeschylus' *Nereids*, produced in c. 490 BCE.⁷¹³ (fig. 8.23.4-6) The dolphin is the usual mount, and

⁷¹⁰ Bibliography: *KH* I, M 20; *LIMC*, s.v. "Nereides," 25; Waldemar Gang, *Nereiden auf Sietieren*. Weimar: Borkmann, 1907. 8.

⁷¹¹ Bibliography on the Attic iconography of the arms of Achilles: *LIMC*, s.v. "Achilleus;" 506-541a; W.H. Roscher, *ML* V (1916-24) 794, 797, and 799, s.v. "Thetis"; M. Mayer, *RE* 6 A (1936) 235-238 s.v. "Thetis"; H. Heydemann, *Nereiden mit den Waffen des Achill: ein Beitrag zur Kunstmythologie*. Halle, 1879; W. R. Paton, "The Armour of Achilles," *Classical Review*, 26.1 (1912), pp. 1-4; K. Friis Johansen, *The Iliad in Early Greek Art*. Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1967. 119-127; Dagmar Kemp-Lindemann, *Darstellungen des Achilleus in griechischer und römischer Kunst*. Bern and Ransfurt: Lang, 1975. 152-164; Stella G. Miller, "Eros and the Arms of Achilles," *AJA*, 90.2 (1986), pp. 159-170; Judith M. Barringer, *Divine Escorts: Nereids in Archaic and Classical Greek Art*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995. 17-48.

⁷¹² For example, on Boston (MA), Museum of Fine Arts, 21.21, BA # 300781.

the Nereids each carry one piece of armor, with Thetis being sometimes difficult to distinguish from the rest. On the Getty vase, as on the Kabirion example, the scene runs around the entire vase, and, with the exception of an additional pair of greaves, have the same weaponry as in the Kabirion scene. With their fluttering veils and drapery, the Kabirion Nereids might at first seem more similar to the elaborately costumed Nereids of South Italian vases, for example those of an Apulian red-figure pelike from end of 5th c. BCE, now in the Getty, than to the rather severe Attic Nereids.⁷¹⁴ (fig. 8.23.7) A closer examination of the gestures and the positions of these Nereids will show that the Kabirion painter is truly closer to the Attic examples, both in the unvarying stance of the Nereids, as opposed to the varied postures of those of South Italy, as well as the unvaried gesture of holding the armor in front of their body and slightly elevated, for the South Italian painters, again, sought to vary this action.

This Kabirion vase was seen as a border-line example, in a “semi-grotesque” style, by Wolters and Brun, but this reexamination of its appearance and fidelity to Attic iconography makes it seem far more likely that its artist, though lively and somewhat clumsy, had no intention of making a caricature.

⁷¹³ Traveling Nereids: Moscow, Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, II1B258, BA # 30233; Malibu (CA), The J. Paul Getty Museum, 91.AE.41.8, BA # 8834. For the theme in South Italian painting, see Malibu (CA), The J. Paul Getty Museum, 86.AE.611, BA # 1002038; compare also to a mosaic from the Villa of Good Fortune, Olynthus, c. 420 BCE. For an example of the iconography of standing Nereids continued into red-figure, see Paris, Musée du Louvre, G482, BA # 207117. For bibliography on the connection with Aeschylus, see Judith M. Barringer, *Divine Escorts: Nereids in Archaic and Classical Greek Art*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995. 3031.

⁷¹⁴ Malibu (CA), The J. Paul Getty Museum, 86.AE.611, BA # 1002038.

Appendix 2: Theatricality of the Kabirion Images

Most previous scholarship on Kabirion Ware imagery has focused on the question of whether or not the scenes are related to Greek comic theater. Some scholars firmly believe that the scenes are illustrations of comic theatrical performances, while others just as firmly argue that the scenes shown could not possibly be theatrical. Still others, more cautiously, hold that the scenes are influenced by, but not doggedly representational of, theatrical performances. After surveying these opinions and adding some new evidence, I will adopt the latter conclusion – though the perils of looking for too close of a correspondence of any image to any text should always be born in mind.⁷¹⁵

Much evidence, both external and internal to the vases, has been brought to bear on this debate. The external evidence serves only to prove the possible existence of comic theatrical performances in the Kabirion, but cannot definitively link the vases to these performances. It is certain that performances of some sort featured in the rituals of the Kabirion, since the sanctuary contains the remains of a large theater. This structure dates from the Hellenistic period (the orchestra was constructed in the 2nd c. BCE, with stone seating added only in the early 1st c. CE) and so cannot be evidence for any definite theatrical performances at the time the vases were painted. Temporary structures could have been erected for performances before the construction of the stone theater, but until it was diverted in the later 3rd century BC so that the stone theater could be built, a stream ran across the valley at the bottom of what would otherwise have been a sloping natural

⁷¹⁵ Among many other recent writings about the relation of texts and images, see the especially pertinent discussion in Jocelyn Penny Small, *The Parallel Worlds of Classical Art and Text*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, particularly 37–78, for an analysis of the difficulty of reading painted scenes as “illustration” of theatrical performances or texts.

theater.⁷¹⁶ The orchestra of the stone theater was filled by a large podium, suggesting that the theater was built for initiation rituals rather than for dramatic performances.⁷¹⁷ Still, Pausanias' description of the *dromena* of the Kabiric ritual have lead several scholars to assume that these mystery *dromena* would have involved, as at Eleusis, the reenacting of parts of the myth of the gods of the sanctuary, in this case the Kabiroi.⁷¹⁸ These scholars further argue that parodies such as those shown on the vases would have been performed during the *dromena*. Several objections stand in the way of this line of reasoning. First is the difficulty of admitting comic turns into the mystic *dromena*, since in surviving uses of the term, it seems to describe wholly serious performances. Next, even if comic elements were present in the *dromena*, it would be odd to see parts of the mysteries represented so explicitly, since even Pausanias apologizes to the reader that he must keep silent about the rites performed in the Kabirion.⁷¹⁹ It should also be noted that attested cultic theater enacted one invariant myth per ritual. To imagine that all the mythological scenes attested on the cups were reenacted at this sanctuary would be an unprecedented situation. In any case, though some of the vases show ritual processions, none of the parody vases have

⁷¹⁶ Schachter, "Evolutions of a Mystery Cult," 130.

⁷¹⁷ Schachter, "Evolutions of a Mystery Cult," 130.

⁷¹⁸ Paus., 9.25.9. That similar ritual dramas or mystery dramas were performed in the sanctuary on Lemnos of related deities (the Kabeiroi and the goddess Kabeiro/Lemnos and Hephaistos) is shown by the flutes and satyr- or silen-masks found there. Nielsen, *Cultic Theatres and Ritual Drama*, 134, n. 131.

⁷¹⁹ Pausanias, 9.25.5. Schachter agrees: "It is *prima facie* unlikely that anything to do with the actual rite of initiation would have been represented openly." Schachter, "Evolutions of a Mystery Cult," 130.

elements indicating ritual or even a setting outside of the narrative one, and so the theory of a link to the *dromena* must remain tenuous.⁷²⁰

The internal evidence offered by the vases is also difficult to interpret. Scholars disagree over whether or not the characters in the parody scenes are wearing masks and other articles of the costume of the comic theater, as well as debates over the possible implications of these costumes. Soon after the publication of the first examples in the late 19th century, several scholars proposed that the Kabirion vases, like South Italian *ex-phylax* vases, showed scenes of comic performances. Furtwängler, for instance, pointed out what he considered illustrations of costume similar to that of Athenian Old Comedy – padded rumps and bellies, large, artificial phalli, and grotesque masks with squinting eyes, snub noses, and gaping mouths – on certain Kabirion vases.⁷²¹ Others put forward the theory that these copied comic performances were part of the ritual *dromena* of the

⁷²⁰ Seeberg points out, but then rejects, that the flute-player and torch-holder on Kassel, Staatl. Mus. ALG 18 might be related to mystery *dromena*: A. Seeberg, “A Boston Fragment with a Prisoner,” *BICS*, 14 (1967), pp. 25-35. 28. The flute-player will be explained in a different way, below.

⁷²¹ A. Furtwängler, “Von der Reise,” *Berliner Philologische Wochenschrift*, 47 (1888), pp. 1482-1486. 1483, on comic costume on no. 289 (Athens, NM 424); A. Furtwängler, “Erwerbungen der Antikensammlungen in Deutschland: Berlin,” *AA*, 10 (1895), pp. 32-43, on comic costume on no. 356 (Berlin, Staatliche Mus., 3284). Bethe also in this period commented on comic costume in the vases: Erich Bethe, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Theaters im Alterthum, Untersuchungen über die Entwicklung des Dramas, der Bühne, des Theaters*. Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1896. 57-59, on comic costume on no. 324 (Athens, National Museum, 10530, BA # 31428). Körte also argues for the relation to the comic theater, although he criticized Bieber’s placement of these stagings in the *dromena*: Alfred Körte, review of M. Bieber, Bieber, *Denkmäler zum Theaterwesen im Altertum. Neue Jahrbucher für das klassische Altertum*, pp. 308-312. The most recent summary of the evidence for the costumes of Athenian Old Comedy is Foley, “Comic Body in Greek Art and Drama.” For a listing of the evidence and discussion of earlier bibliography on comic costume, see Laura M. Stone, *Costume in Aristophanic Comedy*. Salem, N.H.: Ayer, 1984.

sanctuary.⁷²² Bieber, in her 1920 publication *Denkmäler zum Theaterwesen im Altertum*, summarized and expanded on these positions. She argued that most figures on the vases, even the ones showing symposia or other non-mythological scenes, are masked and costumed,⁷²³ and concluded that the vases show scenes from farce performances during the *dromena*.⁷²⁴ Bieber's forceful arguments were cited by following scholars, most of whom regarded the issue of the vases' link to the theater as settled.⁷²⁵ Still, there was a realization that some aspects of her theory were problematic, especially her insistence that all of the scenes were theatrical; thus, in their publication of the vases, Wolters and Bruns took a cautious position, hypothesizing that the parody scenes are indeed

⁷²² This is the conclusion of H.B. Walters, "Odysseus and Kirke on a Boeotian Vase," *JHS*, vol. 13 (1892-93), pp. 77-87. 87; and also of Ettore Romagnoli, "Ninfe e Cabiri," *Ausonia*, 2 (1907), pp. 141-184. on Kabirion ware, see pp. 159-163. 161.

⁷²³ Margarete Bieber, *Denkmäler zum Theaterwesen im Altertum*. Berlin: W. de Gruyter & Co., 1920. 153-5.

⁷²⁴ Bieber, *Denkmäler zum Theaterwesen*, 153; see also Margarete Bieber, *History of the Greek and Roman Theater*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961. 48-49. She proposes that the Theban comic actors mentioned in Athenaeus 14.621d could have improvised these burlesque scenes: Bieber, *Denkmäler zum Theaterwesen*, 153.

⁷²⁵ Scholars who follow Bieber in linking the vases to performances in the *dromena* include: Louis Séchan, *Etudes sur la tragédie grecque dans ses rapports avec la céramique*. Paris: Champion, 1926. 50-51; Lapalus, "Parodies de thèmes héroïques"; Nielsen, *Cultic Theatres and Ritual Drama*, 133. Moret, "Circé tisseuse." Other scholars follow her in ascribing comic costume and theatrical sources to the scenes, but do not explicitly mention the *dromena*: Mary Hamilton Swindler, "A Terracotta Altar in Corinth," *AJA*, 36.4 (1932), pp. 512-520. 517; Christine Alexander, "A Boeotian Cup and a Hellenistic Bronze," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, 32.4 (1937), pp. 90-91. 91; Bernhard Neutsch, ed. *Die Welt der Griechen: im Bilde der Originale der Heidelberger Universitätssammlung: Katalog der Jubiläumsausstellung zur 100-Jahr-Feier der Sammlungen des Archäologischen Instituts Heidelberg im Sommersemester 1948*. Heidelberg: F.H. Kerle, 1948. 32, 60; Ernst Berger and Reinhard Lullies, eds. *Antike Kunstwerke aus der Sammlung Ludwig: Katalog und Einzeldarstellungen*. Basel: Archäologischer Verlag and Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1979. 86-88; Seeberg, "A Boston Fragment with a Prisoner," 28-29. R.M. Cook, *Greek Painted Pottery*. New York: Routledge, 1996. 97.

reflections of comic theater, but not direct illustrations, since the landscape of the Kadmos scene is unlikely to be a stage production.⁷²⁶

Following the official publication of the vases, which made accessible a greater range of evidence than that available to Bieber, who worked from preliminary publications of only a few Kabirion vases, Webster was able to make more thorough and subtle arguments for linking the scenes to comic theater. He compared the Kabirion vases to other works illustrating comic theater and was able to point out similarities in mask type; for example, he held that the Kabirion Kadmos wears what he calls ‘mask type B.’⁷²⁷ Webster held that, in general, the figures on Kabirion vases were similar to those on other vases showing figures from Old Comedy, with fat, phallic men whose clothing does not fully conceal their bodies and fully dressed but snub-nosed and ugly women.⁷²⁸

⁷²⁶ Wolters and Bruns, *Kabirenheiligtum, Vol I*, 126. For the landscaping issue, they seem to have been influenced by that comments of the realistic treatment of landscape on no. 356 (Berlin, Staatliche Mus., 3284) made by M. Rostowzew, “Die Hellenistisch-Römische Architekturlandschaft,” *RM*, 26 (1911), pp. 2-185.

⁷²⁷ T. B. L. Webster, *Monuments Illustrating Old and Middle Comedy*. London: Institute of Classical Studies, 1978. 19. He also tentatively assigns mask S (kore with short parted hair) to Kirke in KH I 83 and 124; masks E (scanty white hair, short beard, short nose), Z (clean shaven, short hair, raised brows), and B (good head of hair, short beard, open trumpet mouth) to the figures in KH I 109 M 17 (Achilles and Chiron); mask B to KH I 112 M 34; mask J to Amsterdam, Allard Pierson Stichting Coll., 582; and mask B to Berlin, Staatliche Mus., 3284/ KH I 100 K 22. Webster, *Monuments Illustrating Old and Middle Comedy*, 19-20.

⁷²⁸ T. B. L. Webster, *Greek Theatre Production*. London: Methuen, 1956. 137. Pickard-Cambridge had claimed that he saw no costumes or masks on the figures, but he did not have available to him the fuller publication of excavated materials that Webster had, and so his denial of any connection of the scenes to the theater must be discounted (and was indeed taken out of the second edition of *Dithyramb, Tragedy and Comedy*). Sir Arthur Wallace Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyramb, Tragedy and Comedy*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1927. 269 -270.

These details and similarities effectively counter those who would argue that all of the details of the grotesque representation of figures on the Kabirion vases are explicable by a caricaturist style of drawing rather than any influence from the masks and costumes of comic theater.⁷²⁹ It is definite that the Kabirion painters were capable of non-theatrical caricature, part of a Boeotian tradition of humorous scenes.⁷³⁰ It can thus be argued that this tradition accounts for all of the elements of the style of the Kabirion vases, which thus need not have been influenced by actual theatrical performances in the Kabirion at all. It is certainly true that some elements on the vases do not seem to be inspired by theatrical costume; for example, the definitely deformed, not just costumed, bodies of some naked figures (pygmies and wrestlers, for example). Again, though, the use of some non-theatrical elements does not exclude the possibility of theatrical inspiration for other elements, and indeed, the Attic “Kyrene Herakles” vase exactly parallels this mix of

⁷²⁹ Scholars discussing the caricature elements of the vases include: Henry Beauchamp Walters, *History of Ancient Pottery, Greek, Etruscan, and Roman*. London: J. Murray, 1905. 391-392, on nr. 399; Pericle Ducati, *Storia della ceramica greca*. Florence: Alinari, 1922. 440: “una intensa forza di caricatura nella laidezza delle forme piene di vita”; K. Friis Johansen, “Achill bei Chiron,” in *Dragma*, Martino P. Nilsson. Lund: H. Ohlsson, 1939. pp. 181-205. 204-205, on nr. 399; B. A. Sparkes, “The Taste of a Boeotian Pig,” *JHS*, 87 (1967), 116-130. 126. An interesting argument could be made that many of the figures are represented as dwarf-like because the Kabeiroi themselves were possibly thought to be dwarfs, but this would not explain why all characters, not just the Kabeiroi, would be shown so. Dwarf-like Kabeiroi: see Herodotus, 3.37; Hesychius, s.v. *Kabeiroi*, cf. Aristophanes, *Peace*, 790, and discussion in Dasen, *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece*, 195. On the possible smallness of the Idaean Dactyls, to whom the Kabeiroi are sometimes connected, see Dasen, *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece*, 196. Schachter thinks that use of pygmoid features must reflect the influence of the Kabiric cult: Schachter, “Evolutions of a Mystery Cult,” 130-131.

⁷³⁰ Mitchell gives as examples of the general sense of humor of Boeotian vase-painters Athens CC1114; Boardman *History of Greek Vase-Painting*, 143, fig. 177; Oxford 1966.1006. Mitchell, *Comic Pictures in Greek Vase-Painting*, 189. See also London, British Museum, 1907.5-18.3, discussed in A. D. Ure, “Koes,” *JHS*, 71 (1951), 194-197.

theatrical and non-theatrical elements, since it features one figure, the Nike, with caricatured negroid features, while another, the torch-holder, wears the wrinkled tights and attached phallos of comic costume.⁷³¹ (fig. 8.2.1). Unlike Bieber, Webster is willing to admit that the vases have such non-theatrical elements, for he does not presume a direct and exclusive correspondence with the theater. He points out that the Kabirion vases do not show the details of costuming – the wrinkles of tights and ties for the padding – that the South Italian *ex-phylax* painters include with such care, and also that some scenes, as painted on the vases, could have hardly taken place on stage – his example is the scene of Odysseus traveling across the sea on his amphora-raft.⁷³² Still, Webster held that the vase-painters would have had no reason to show their mythological characters as phallic unless they saw them so costumed on stage, and thus concludes that the painters were at least in some measure influenced by comic theatrical performances.⁷³³ He qualifies this by admitting that the painters expanded from this basis, imagining the characters in scenes not performable on stage, such as the journey of

⁷³¹ Paris, Musée du Louvre, L9 (N3408), BA # 217495. That a scene can logically have more than one source means that Mitchell's argument that the existence of a serious Boeotian version of the Judgment of Paris (Boston 01.8069) proves that the parodic Kabirion version must take such painted versions and not theatrical presentations as its sole source is not valid. Mitchell, *Comic Pictures in Greek Vase-Painting*, 165-166.

⁷³² Webster, *Greek Theatre Production*, 138-139. The non-theatrical nature of the raft scene is supported by the appearance of the motif of a figure on an amphora-raft on Greek gems – see discussion, below, in section on “Odysseus Traveling.” On the insistence on the artificiality of the costume in South Italian painting, see Foley, “Comic Body in Greek Art and Drama,” 281.

⁷³³ Webster, *Greek Theatre Production*, 139.

Odysseus.⁷³⁴ Thus, the grotesque style in which they are represented is to be imagined as a combination of caricature and costuming.

Braun, in the most recent official publication of the Kabirion ceramics, followed Bieber's theory that all of the scenes had theatrical sources while attempting to use Webster's method of observation of details.⁷³⁵ Her most notable contribution is an attempt to show correspondences of vase subjects to the surviving titles of Athenian Middle Comedy (c. 400- 320 BCE), since Middle Comedy covers the period of the production of the vases, according to her dating.⁷³⁶ Middle Comedy included plays linked by Braun to the Kabirion mythological subjects of Pan or satyrs,⁷³⁷ pygmies,⁷³⁸ Odysseus and Kirke,⁷³⁹ Herakles,⁷⁴⁰ Kephalos,⁷⁴¹ Bellerophon and the Chimera,⁷⁴² and Achilles

⁷³⁴ Webster, *Greek Theatre Production*, 139.

⁷³⁵ Thus she points out vases she considers as showing theatrical costume: nr. 410 and 33ab; as well as those with merely the theatrical phallos: nr. 31, 115, 131, 134, and 303. Karin Braun and Elisabeth Haevernick, *Bemalte Keramik und Glass aus dem Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1981.

⁷³⁶ Braun and Haevernick, *Bemalte Keramik und Glass aus dem Kabirenheiligtum*, 26-9.

⁷³⁷ Pan, satyrs, and maenads, no. 296, 382, 397, 418, 304, 383, 388, 375, 408. *Pan*, *Aphis*; *Satyroi*, Timokles (2x); *Satyroi*, Ophelion; *The Bacchae*, Antiphon.

⁷³⁸ Pygmy fights, no. 299, 325, 354, 367. *Kerkopes*, Eubulos.

⁷³⁹ Odysseus and Kirke, no. 363; 376; 398; 402. Comedies: *Kirke*, Anaxilas; *Kirke*, Ephippos; *Kalypso*, Anaxilas; *Odysseus*, Anaxandrides; *Odysseus*, Amphis; *Odysseus*, Eubulos; *Washing of Odysseus*, Alexis; *Odysseus at the Loom*, Alexis(?).

⁷⁴⁰ Herakles, no. 405. *Herakles*, Anaxandrides. Herakles and Acheloos, no. 356. *Acheloos*, Demonikos. Herakles and Omphale (?), no. 403. *Omphale*, Antiphon; *Omphale*, Kratinos.

⁷⁴¹ Kephalos, nr. 303. *Kephalos*, Philetairos.

presented to Chiron,⁷⁴³ and even the less certainly identified scenes of the *hieros gamos*,⁷⁴⁴ the boar hunt,⁷⁴⁵ the battle in front of the gate,⁷⁴⁶ and the lyre-player, perhaps Apollo, according to Braun, on the back of a horse.⁷⁴⁷ Braun also attempts to link non-mythological vase scenes to the titles of Middle Comedy, finding correspondences for some scenes of cult activities⁷⁴⁸ and banqueting.⁷⁴⁹ Her connections are optimistic; for example, to assimilate as she does the pygmies of the Kabirion vases to the Kerkopes, in order to connect the vases to Eubulos' *Kerkopes*, is too tenuous, since the Kabirion pygmies make no reference to any narrative elements in the story of the Kerkopes, nor do they bear any resemblance to the Kerkopes of Attic vase-painting. Others of her connections, such as that of scenes of Kabirios to plays titled *Dionysos*, are too general to aid in interpretation. All of the proposed connections of cultic and sympotic scenes to plays are of this general type, and it does not seem that these general connections can be used as evidence for the theatrical character of such scenes. These scenes, along with

⁷⁴² Bellerophon, Chimera, Pegasos. no. 324, 414. *Bellerophontes*, Eubulos.

⁷⁴³ Achilles, Peleus, Chiron, no. 399. *Chiron*, Anazandrides; *Chiron*, Philetairos; *Chiron*, Kratinos the Younger.

⁷⁴⁴ *gamos* (*hieros gamos*?), no. 289. *Gamos*, Antiphon; *Gamos*, Sophilos.

⁷⁴⁵ Boar hunt, no. 387. *Meleagros*, Philetairos.

⁷⁴⁶ Battle in front of a gate, no. 365. *Seven against Thebes*, Alexis.

⁷⁴⁷ Lyre-player (Apollo?) riding a horse, no. 92. *The Lyreplayer*, Antiphanes.

⁷⁴⁸ Myste, mystagoge, dancer, no. 292. *The Begging-Priest*, Antiphon. Reclining Kabirios, no. 302, 305. *Dionysos*, Eubulos (3x); *Dionysos*, Timokles. Reclining Kabirios, Pais, and attendants, no. 302. *Anthropogonia*, Antiphon.

⁷⁴⁹ Banqueting/ symposium scenes, no. 297, 307, 315, 316, 358, 369, 377, 404, 92. *Kline*, Nikostratos; *The Flute-Players or the Twins*, Antiphanes; *The Lyreplayer*, Antiphanes.

those of “every-day,” non-mythological activities, such as athletics or hunting, seem to me to argue for the non-theatrical sources of some Kabirion painting. About the mythological scenes Braun is more confident, arguing that such parodies were presented during the *dromena*, possibly as farces that would have served the same function as satyr-plays.⁷⁵⁰ It is true that a comparison with Middle Comedy titles shows that the specific mythological characters represented in the Kabirion parody scenes were also subject to comic treatment in the Attic theater. Such overlap cannot prove that the vases illustrate these works of Middle Comedy, or even any theatrical comedy at all, but merely that these characters – Odysseus, Herakles, Kephalos, Bellerophon, Achilles - were popularly parodied, in some genre or another, in more than one area of Greece.⁷⁵¹

Several other Kabirion vases feature narrative and possibly theatrical scenes. A vase now in Bonn shows a draped man standing by a three-legged table with objects on it, threateningly raising his hand against two naked running men.⁷⁵² (fig. 8.2.2). In the interpretation proposed by the Ures, he is a priest defending offerings against would-be thieves.⁷⁵³ Desire for and theft of sacrificial food offerings is a common theme in surviving Greek comedy, and this may well be a theatrical scene.

⁷⁵⁰ Braun and Haevernick, *Bemalte Keramik und Glass aus dem Kabirenheiligtum*, 27. For a disputation of this idea, see John Boardman, review of *Das Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben, Band IV: Bemalte Keramik und Glas aus dem Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben. Classical Review*, 33.1 (1983), pp. 149-150.

⁷⁵¹ Braun and Haevernick, *Bemalte Keramik und Glass aus dem Kabirenheiligtum*, 27. These similarities in choice of comic heroes shows once again the possibility of making constructive links between Boeotia and Attica.

⁷⁵² no. 362 (Bonn, Akademisches Kunstmus. 301).

⁷⁵³ A. D. Ure and P.N. Ure, “Boeotian Vases in the Akademisches Kunstmuseum,” 26-27.

One other Kabirion fragment has been interpreted as showing a theatrical scene.⁷⁵⁴ (fig. 8.2.3) It shows, in grotesque style, a sacrifice in progress, with a small boy holding an oinochoe and a man with a knife. Swindler, publishing the fragment, thought that the left edge of the fragment showed the remains of the back of a satyr, but a recent re-cleaning of the fragment shows little sign of the tail that she thought present.

Theatrical elements are more definite on another Kabirion vase featuring a scene of escaping prisoners, accompanied by a flute-player.⁷⁵⁵ (fig. 8.2.4) Attic theatrical performances were accompanied by aulos-players, and this one is very similar to the aulos-players piping for comic choruses on Attic vases and represented onstage in some South Italian vases.⁷⁵⁶

Bieber pointed out a final piece of evidence, comparing the Kabirion scenes to an oinochoe of the Anthesteria type showing a grotesque Perseus dancing on stage.⁷⁵⁷ (fig 8.2.5) If one thinks of the Kabirion sanctuary as playing host to a similar type of

⁷⁵⁴ no. K30 (Bryn Mawr, PA, Bryn Mawr University, nr. P-217a). For this description, see Mary Hamilton Swindler, "The Bryn Mawr Collection of Greek Vases," *AJA*, 20.3 (1916), pp. 308-345. 317. My great thanks to Tamara Johnston of Bryn Mawr for having this fragment cleaned and rephotographed.

⁷⁵⁵ no. 390 (Kassel, Staatliche Kunstslg, Leihgabe Slg. Ludwig, Aachen).

⁷⁵⁶ On scenes of comedy choruses accompanied by aulos-players, see J.R. Green, "A Representation of the Birds of Aristophanes," *J. P. Getty Museum: Greek Vases*, 2 (1985), 95-118. 98-111. On aulos-players on phylax vases, see Taplin, *Comic Angels*, 69-78. In particular, compare the Kabirion vase with St. Petersburg, Hermitage, inv. 2074, Apulian bell-krater of c. 375-350 BCE; Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria, D14/1973. Campanian bell-krater, c. 350-325 BCE; and Rio de Janeiro, Museu Nacional, 1500. Campanian bell-krater, c. 375-350 BCE. In all these, the aulos-players are female and not masked (in contrast with the surrounding comic actors)

⁷⁵⁷ Athens, coll. Vastos. Bieber, *History of the Greek and Roman Theater*, 48-49.

aischrologia ritual as did the Anthesteria, this chous would be evidence for similar comedic performance, but there is no reason to assume that the rituals took the same form in the different sanctuaries.

In the absence of any such explicit representation of the stage, the only conclusion justified by the evidence of the Kabirion vases is a cautious allowance for multiple sources, including the theatrical, for the scenes. This is to follow Boardman, who has written that the parody scenes are “in the spirit” of Attic comic theater, but that they are either representations of stage farce *or* independent visual humor, parodic versions of serious painted myths.⁷⁵⁸ Such caution, if taken to its logical limit, could even be understood to deny that there were theatrical performances at the Kabirion at all. Thus Breitholtz, though he acknowledges that some vase figures seem to be wearing padded costumes and false phalloi, holds that these figures are inspired by other painted representations of actors, on Attic vases, and not directly from actual theater in Boeotia.⁷⁵⁹ I think that it is most logical to conclude that performances of some sort took place at the Kabirion during the time of the production of the vases. These performances are supported, firstly, by the similarities of the Kabirion ritual to that of the Anthesteria, with its attested dramatic performances, and, secondly, by the importance of the theater in the sanctuary in the Hellenistic period. Of course, these Kabirion performances could

⁷⁵⁸ The spirit of theater: Boardman, *History of Greek Vases*, 78. Either representations of farce or independent visual humor: Boardman, *Early Greek Vase Painting*, 258. Similarly, Huddilston also held that the Kabirion scenes were not directly based on any known plays, but were either parodies of theatrical tragedies or closely inspired by comedies: John Homer Huddilston, *Lessons from Greek Pottery*. London: Macmillan & Co., 1902. 97.

⁷⁵⁹ Lennart Breitholtz, *Die dorische Farce im griechischen Mutterland vor dem 5. Jahrhundert: Hypothese oder Realität*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1960. 198-201.

have been of any type: professional or amateur restagings of Attic plays, locally produced farces, or theatrical rituals during initiation ceremonies. Without more evidence it is impossible to be certain.

Some early scholars simply connected the Kabirion burlesque scenes with the assimilation of Kabirios to Dionysos. They hold that he must be the patron of comic performances in that sanctuary just as he was in Athens.⁷⁶⁰ Others, pointing out the evidence for burlesque or humorous inclusions in other, better-known mystery rites, such as the Iambe/Baubo incident in the Demeter narrative and its inclusion in the Eleusinian rites, argued that the Kabirion scenes showed similar humorous parts of the mysteries.⁷⁶¹

⁷⁶⁰ See, for example, the explanations of Bieber, *History of the Greek and Roman Theater*, 49; Pericle Ducati, *Storia della ceramica greca*. Florence: Alinari, 1922. 440.

⁷⁶¹ Cecil Smith, "Orphic Myths on Attic Vases," *JHS*, vol. 11 (1890), pp. 343-51. 348-349; Walters, "Odysseus and Kirke on a Boeotian Vase," 87.

Appendix 3: Primary Sources for the Kabeiroi

Following are the ancient sources that mention the Kabeiroi. These sources use several different names, as recognized by Strabo: Kabeiroi, Korybantes, Idaean Daktyloi, and the Telchines.

Kabeiroi in General

Strabo, *Geography* 10.3.7

“Some represent the Korybantes, the Kabeiroi, the Idaean Daktyloi, and the Telchines as identical with the Kouretes, others represent them as all kinsmen of one another and differentiate only certain small matters in which they differ in respect to one another; but, roughly speaking and in general, they represent them, one and all, as a kind of inspired people and as subject to Bacchic frenzy, and, in the guise of ministers, as inspiring terror at the celebration of the sacred rites by means of war-dances, accompanied by uproar and noise and cymbals and drums and arms, and also by flute and outcry; and consequently these rites are in a way regarded as having a common relationship, I mean these and those of the Samothracians and those in Lemnos and in several other places, because the divine ministers are called the same. However, every investigation of this kind pertains to theology, and is not foreign to the speculation of the philosopher.”

Strabo, *Geography* 10.3.9

“But I must now investigate how it comes about that so many names have been used of one and the same thing [Kouretes, Korybantes and Kabeiroi], and the theological element contained in their history. Now this is common both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, to perform their sacred rites in connection with the relaxation of a festival, these rites being performed sometimes with religious frenzy, sometimes without it; sometimes with music, sometimes not; and sometimes in secret, sometimes openly. And it is in accordance with the dictates of nature that this should be so, for, in the first place, the relaxation draws the mind away from human occupations and turns the real mind towards that which is divine; and, secondly, the religious frenzy seems to afford a kind of divine inspiration and to be very like that of the soothsayer; and, thirdly, the secrecy with which the sacred rites are concealed induces reverence for the divine, since it imitates the nature of the divine, which is to avoid being perceived by our human senses; and, fourthly, music, which includes dancing as well as rhythm and melody, at the same time, by the delight it affords and by its artistic beauty, brings us in touch with the divine, and this for the following reason; for although it has been well said that human beings then act most like the gods when they are doing good to others, yet one might better say, when they are happy; and such happiness consists of rejoicing, celebrating festivals, pursuing philosophy, and engaging in music.”

Herodotus, 3.37.2

“... he entered the temple of Hephaistos [i.e., the Egyptian god Ptah] and jeered at the image there.... I will describe it for anyone who has not seen these figures: it is the likeness of a dwarf. Also he entered the temple of the Kabeiroi [Egyptian gods identified with the Kabeiroi], into which no one may enter save the priest; the images here he even burnt, with bitter mockery. These also are like the images of Hephaistos [Ptah], and are said to be his sons.”

The Kabeiroi of Thebes

Pausanias, 4.1.5-9

“Methapos was an Athenian by birth, an expert in the mysteries and founder of all kinds of rites. It was he who established the Mysteries of the Kabeiroi at Thebes.”

Pausanias, 9.22.5

“Just about the centre of Anthedon [in Boeotia] is a sanctuary of the Kabeiroi, with a grove around it, near which is a temple of Demeter and her daughter, with images of white marble.”

Pausanias, Guide to Greece 9.25.5-10

“Advancing from here twenty-five stades you come to a grove of Kabirion Demeter and the Maid. The initiated are permitted to enter it. The sanctuary of the Kabiroi is some seven stades distant from this grove. I must ask the curious to forgive me if I keep silence as to who the Kabiroi are, and what is the nature of the ritual performed in honor of them and of the Mother. But there is nothing to prevent my declaring to all what the Thebans say was the origin of the ritual. They say that once there was in this place a city, with inhabitants called Kabiroi; and that Demeter came to know Prometheus, one of the Kabiroi, and Aetnaelis his son, and entrusted something to their keeping. What was entrusted to them, and what happened to it, seemed to me a sin to put into writing, but at any rate the rites are a gift of Demeter to the Kabiroi. At the time of the invasion of the Epigoni and the taking of Thebes, the Kabiroi were expelled from their homes by the Argives and the rites for a while ceased to be performed. But they go on to say that afterwards Pelarge, the daughter of Potnieus, and Isthmiades her husband established the mysteries here to begin with, but transferred them to the place called Alexiarus. But because Pelarge conducted the initiation outside the ancient borders, Telondes and those who were left of the clan of the Kabiroi returned again to Kabiria. Various honors were to be established for Pelarge by Telondes in accordance with an oracle from Dodona, one being the sacrifice of a pregnant victim. The wrath of the Kabiroi no man may placate, as has been proved on many occasions. For certain private people dared to perform in Naupactus the ritual just as it was done in Thebes, and soon afterwards justice overtook them. Then, again, certain men of the army of Xerxes left behind with Mardonius in Boeotia entered the sanctuary of the Kabiroi, perhaps in the hope of great wealth, but rather, I suspect, to show their contempt of its gods; all these immediately were struck with madness, and flung themselves to their deaths into the sea or from the tops of precipices. Again, when Alexander after his victory wasted with fire all the Thebaid,

including Thebes itself, some men from Macedonia entered the sanctuary of the Kabeiroi, as it was in enemy territory, and were destroyed by thunder and lightning from heaven.

Kabeiroi at Samothrace

Herodotus, *Histories* 2.51

“The ithyphallic images of Hermes; the production of these came from the Pelasgians, from whom the Athenians were the first Greeks to take it, and then handed it on to others Whoever has been initiated into the rites of the Kabeiroi, which the Samothracians learned from the Pelasgians and now practice, understands what my meaning is. Samothrace was formerly inhabited by those Pelasgians who came to live among the Athenians, and it is from them that the Samothracians take their rites. The Athenians, then, were the first Greeks to make ithyphallic images of Hermes, and they did this because the Pelasgians taught them. The Pelasgians told a certain sacred tale about this, which is set forth in the Samothracian Mysteries.”

Clement, *Exhortation to the Greeks* 2.16

“If you would like a vision of the *Orgia Korybantion* also, this is the story. Two of the Korybantes slew a third one, who was their brother, covered the head of the corpse with a purple cloak, and then wreathed and buried it, bearing it upon a brazen shield to the skirts of Olympos. Here we see what the *Mysteria* are, in one word, murders and burials! The priests of these *Mysteria*, whom such as are interested in them call ‘*Anaktotelestes*,’ add a portent to the dismal tale. They forbid wild celery, root and all, to be placed on the table, for they actually believe that wild celery grows out of the blood that flowed from the murdered brother ... The Korybantes are also called by the name Kabeiroi, which proclaims the *Teletes Kabeirikes*. For this very pair of fratricides got possession of the chest in which the virilia of Dionysos were deposited, and brought it to Tyrrhenia, traders in glorious wares! There they sojourned, being exiles, and communicated their precious teaching of piety, the virilia and the chest, to Tyrrhenoi for purposes of worship. For this reason, not unnaturally some wish to call Dionysos Attis, because he was mutilated.”

Orphic Hymn 39 to Korybas

“To Korybas ... Each of thy brothers killing, blood is thine, twofold Kourete, many-formed, divine. By thee transmuted, Deo’s body pure became a Drakon’s savage and obscure.”

Strabo, *Geography* 10.3.19-21

“Others say that the Korybantes were sons of Zeus and Kalliope and were identical with the Kabeiroi, and that these went off to Samothrace, which in earlier times was called Melite, and that their rites were mystical. But though the Skepsian, who compiled these myths, does not accept the last statement, on the ground that no mystic story of the Kabeiroi is told in Samothrace, still he cites also the opinion of Stesimbrotos the Thasian that the sacred rites in Samothrace were performed in honor of the Kabeiroi: and the Skepsian says that they were called Kabeiroi after the mountain Kabeiros in Berekynthia... Akusilaüs, the Argive, calls Kadmilos the son of Kabeiro and Hephaistos,

and Kadmilos the father of three Kabeiroi, and these the fathers of the Nymphai called Kabeirides. Pherekydes says that nine Kyrbantēs were sprung from Apollon and Rhetia, and that they took up their abode in Samothrace; and that three Kabeiroi and three Nymphai called Kabeirides were the children of Kabeiro, the daughter of Proteus, and Hephaistos, and that sacred rites were instituted in honor of each triad. Now it has so happened that the Kabeiroi are most honored in Imbros and Lemnos, but they are also honored in separate cities of the Troad; their names, however, are kept secret. Herodotus says that there were temples of the Kabeiroi in Memphis, as also of Hephaistos [actually of Egyptian Ptah and his sons], but that Kambyes destroyed them. The places where these deities were worshipped are uninhabited, both the Korybanteion in Hamaxitia in the territory now belonging to the Alexandrians near Sminthion, and Korybissa in Skepsia in the neighborhood of the river Eurēeis and of the village which bears the same name and also of the winter torrent Aethalōeis.”

Strabo, *Geography* Bk 7 fr 50

“Many writers have identified the gods that are worshipped in Samothrace with the Kabeiroi, though they cannot say who the Kabeiroi themselves are, just as the Kyrbantēs and Korybantēs, and likewise the Kouretes and the Idaean Dactyls, are identified with them.”

Strabo, *Geography* 10.3.20

“Some, however, believe that the Kouretes were the same as the Korybantēs and were ministers of Hekate.”

Strabo, *Geography* Bk 7 fr 47

“Iasion and Dardanos, two brothers, used to live in Samothrace. But when Iasion was struck by a thunderbolt because of his sin against Demeter, Dardanos sailed away from Samothrace, went and took up his abode at the foot of Mount Ida, calling the city Dardania, and taught the Trojans the Samothracian Mysteries.”

Strabo, *Geography* 10.3.15

“They [the poets] also invented some of the names by which to designate the ministers, choral dancers, and attendants upon the sacred rites [of Rhea & Dionysos], I mean Kabeiroi and Korybantēs and Pans and Satyrs and Tityroi.”

Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 1.916

“They [the Argonauts] beached this ship at Samothrace ... He [Orpheus] wished them, by holy initiation, to learn something of the secret rites, and so sail on with greater confidence across the formidable sea. Of the rites I say no more, pausing only to salute the isle itself and the Powers [the Kabeiroi] that dwell in it, to whom belong the mysteries of which we must not sing.”

Diodorus Siculus, 5.48.2

“Zeus desired that the other of his two sons [Iasion of Samothrace] might also attain honor, and so he instructed him in the initiatory rites of the Mysteries, which had existed on the island since ancient times but was at that time, so to speak, put in his hands; it is

not lawful, however, for any but the initiated to hear about the mysteries. And Iasion is reputed to have been the first to initiate strangers into them and by this means to bring the initiatory rite to high esteem. After this Kadmos, the son of Agenor, came in the course of his quest for Europa to the Samothracians, and after participating in the initiation he married Harmonia, who was the sister of Iasion and not, as the Greeks recount in their mythologies, the daughter of Ares.... Now the details of the initiatory rite are guarded among the matters not to be divulged and are communicated to the initiates alone; but the fame has traveled wide of how these gods [the Kabeiroi] appear to mankind and bring unexpected aid to those initiates of theirs who call upon them in the midst of perils. The claim is also made that men who have taken part in the mysteries become both more pious and more just and better in every respect than they were before. And this is the reason, we are told, why the most famous both of the ancient heroes and of the demi-gods were eagerly desirous to taking part in the initiatory rite; and in fact Jason and the Dioskouroi, and Herakles and Orpheus as well, after their initiation attained success in all the campaigns they undertook, because these gods appeared to them.”

Diodorus Siculus, 5.64.3

“But some historians, and Ephoros is one of them, record that the Idaean Daktyloi were in fact born on the Mt Ida which is in Phrygia and passed over to Europe together with Mygdon; and since they were wizards, they practiced charms and initiatory rites and mysteries, and in the course of a sojourn in Samothrace they amazed the natives of that island not a little by their skill in such matters. And it was at this time, we are further told, that Orpheus, who was endowed with an exceptional gift of poesy and song, also became a pupil of theirs, and he was subsequently the first to introduce initiatory rites and mysteries to the Greeks.”

Diodorus Siculus, 4.43.1

“There came on a great storm and the chieftains [Argonauts] had given up hope of being saved, when Orpheus, they say, who was the only one on ship-board who had ever been initiated in the Mysteries of the deities of Samothrace, offered to these deities prayers for their salvation. And immediately the wind died down and two stars fell over the heads of the Dioskouroi, and the whole company was amazed at the marvel which had taken place and concluded that they had been rescued from their perils by an act of providence of the gods. For this reason, the story of this reversal of fortune for the Argonauts has been handed down to succeeding generations, and sailors when caught in storms always direct their prayers to the deities of Samothrace and attribute the appearance of the two stars to the epiphany of the Dioskouroi.”

Diodorus Siculus, 4.48.6

“[The Argonauts] had already reached the middle of the Pontic Sea when they ran into a storm which put them in the greatest peril. But when Orpheus ... offered up prayers to the deities of Samothrace, the winds ceased and there appeared near the ship Glaukos the Sea-God, as he is called ... and he counseled them, accordingly, that so soon as they touched their lands they should pray their vows to the gods through the intervention of whom they had twice already been saved.”

Diodorus Siculus, 4.49.8

“The Argonauts, they say, set forth from the Troad and arrived at Samothrace, where they again paid their vows to the great gods and dedicated in the sacred precinct the bowls which are preserved there even to this day.”

Aelian, *On Animals* 15.23

“They say that the pilot-fish is sacred not only to Poseidon but is also beloved of the gods of Samothrace.”

Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica* 2.431

“Electra’s island [Samothrace] grows larger, guarding the secret of the Thracian rites; for here dwells the great and terrible god, and here are ordained penalties for an unguarded tongue. No storm sent by Jove ever dares to beat with its billows upon this land; of his own will the god makes fierce his waves, what time he would forbid faithless sailors to touch his shores. But Thyotes the priest meets the Minyae [Argonauts] and bids them welcome to the land and to the temples, revealing their Mysteries to his guests.”

Nonnus, *Dionysiaca* 4.184

“Already the bird of morning was cutting the air with loud cries; already the helmeted bands of desert-haunting Korybantes were beating on their shields in the Knossian dance, and leaping with rhythmic steps, and the ox hides thudded under the blows of the iron as they whirled them about in rivalry, while the double pipe made music, and quickened the dancers with its rollicking tune in time to the bounding steps. Aye, and the trees whispered, the rocks boomed, the forests held jubilee with their intelligent movings and shakings, and the Dryads did sing. Packs of bears joined the dance, skipping and wheeling face to face; lions with a roar from emulous throats mimicked the triumphant cry of the priests of the Kabeiroi, sane in their madness; the reveling pipes rang out a tune to honor of Hekate, divine friend of dogs, those single pipes, which the horn-polisher’s art invented in Kronos’s days.”

Nonnus, *Dionysiaca* 3.61

“The noisy Korybantes with their ringing din awoke Kadmos early in the morning; the Sidonian seamen also with one accord, hearing the never-silent ox hide at dawn, rose from their rattling pebbly pallets and left the brine-beaten back of the shore.:

Suda, s.v. *Zerynthia*

“Zerinthian cave, where they used to sacrifice dogs. There the mysteries of the Korybantes and of Hekate took place.”

Suidas, s.v. *all’ ei tis humon en Samothraikei memuemenos esti*

“‘But if there is someone among you initiated in Samothrace, now is a fine time to pray that both feet of the pursuer be put out of joint’: In Samothrace there were certain initiation-rites, which they supposed efficacious as a charm against certain dangers. In that place were also the mysteries of the Korybantes and those of Hekate and the Zerinthian cave, where they sacrificed dogs. The initiates supposed that these things save [them] from terrors and from storms. The bone-socket of the pursuer to be ‘be put out of

joint' means to 'be distorted and dislocated.' The way forward becomes an obstacle to him, so that he can no longer turn back."

Kabeiroi at Lemnos

Callimachus, *Aetia*, fr 115

"And they [the Kabeiroi] grew up secretly by the furnaces of Hephaistos [on Lemnos], learning the art of the hammer...."

Strabo, *Geography* 10.3.19-21

"Akusilaüs, the Argive, calls Kadmilos the son of Kabeiro and Hephaistos, and Kadmilos the father of three Kabeiroi, and these the fathers of the Nymphai called Kabeirides."

Nonnus, *Dionysiaca* 14.17

"First from the fire-peak rock of Lemnos the two Kabeiroi ... beside the mystic torch of Samos, two sons of Hephaistos whom Thracian Kabeiro had borne to the heavenly smith, Alkon and Eurymedon well skilled at the forge, who bore their mother's tribal name."

The Kabeiroi of Locris

Pausanias, 10.38.7

"The Amphisians [of Locris] also celebrate Mysteries in honor of the Boy Kings, as they are called. Their accounts as to who of the gods the Boy Kings are do not agree; some say they are the Dioskouroi, and others, who pretend to have fuller knowledge, hold them to be the Kabeiroi."

The Kabeiroi also feature in some additional Orphic Hymns (Orphic Hymn 31, 38, and 39), and in Nonnus' description of Dionysos in India (*Dionysiaca*, 14.17, 17.192, 24.77, 27.325, 29.193, 30.42, 30.135, 43.307), but these passages have little additional information.

Appendix 4: Primary Sources in Translation for Aischrologia

Fluck first collected the primary sources for *aischrologia*, printing them in the original language in his *Skurrile Riten in griechischen Kulte*n.⁷⁶² Because Fluck's work is not readily available, the citations were reprinted by Halliwell.⁷⁶³ Translations of some of the texts are difficult to find, and so they are collected here.

Sources with Unspecified Ritual Setting

Bavaricus, *s.v. kai loidoreiv*

"Festivals of raillery, during which the processioners satirize (*komôdeiv*) and rail (*loidorein*) at each other."

Aristotle, *Politics* 1336b14-17

"The lawgiver ought therefore to banish indecent talk, as much as anything else, out of the state altogether.... And since we banish any talk of this kind, clearly we must also banish the seeing of either pictures or representations that are indecent. The officials must therefore be careful that there may be no sculpture or painting that represents indecent actions, except in the temples of a certain class of gods to whom the law allows even scurrility (*tothasmon*); but in regard to these the law permits men still of suitable age to worship the gods both on their own behalf and on behalf of the children and women."

Iamblichus, *de myst.* 1.11

Responding to arguments of Porphyry that "obscene utterances" (*aischrorhmosuntas*) are not fit for a spiritual interpretation of the mysteries, Iamblichus writes that: "my view is that they have the role of expressing the absence of beauty which is characteristic of matter and the previous ugliness of those things that are going to be brought to order.... So then, once again, one is prompted to seek after the causes of form and beauty when one learns the nature of obscenity from the utterance of obscenities; one rejects the practice of obscenities (*aischron*), while by means of uttering them one makes clear one's knowledge of them, and thus turns one's impulses in the opposite direction."

Plut. *def. orac.* 14 (= *Moralia* 417c)

"...as for festivals and sacrifices, which may be compared with ill-omened and gloomy days, in which occur the eating of raw flesh, rending of victims, fasting, and beating of breasts, and again in many places scurrilous language (*aischrologiai*) at the shrines... I

⁷⁶² Hans Fluck, *Skurrile Riten in griechischen Kulte*n. Diss., Freiburg, 1931.

⁷⁶³ Stephen Halliwell, "Le Rire Rituel et la Nature de l'Ancienne Comédie Attique," in *Le rire des Grecs: anthropologie du rire en Grèce ancienne*. Ed. Marie-Laurence Desclos. Grenoble: Millon, 2000. pp. 155-168.

should say that these acts are not performed for any god, but are soothing and appeasing rites for the averting of evil spirits.”

Sources for the *Gephurismos*

Strabo 9.1.24

“The rivers of Attica are the Cephissus, which has its source in the deme Trinemeis; it flows through the plain (hence the allusions to the “bridge and the “bridge-railleries” (*gephurismoî*)).”

Suda, *s.v. gephuristai*

“Jokes: In Eleusis, seated men mock (*eskoptôv*) the passersby at the bridge.”

Suda, *s.v. gephurizon*

“Treating scornfully, disparaging. Polybius: “Sulla having destroyed Athens was close to destroying the city in anger over the many jokes (*skômmata*) which Aristion abusing (*gephurizon*) and mocking him uttered throughout the whole siege.”

Suda, *s.v. gephuris*

“Some prostitute on the bridge, according to Herakleus; but not a woman, but a man there seated, completely veiled [or, completely covered] calling jokes (*skômmata*) at the distinguished citizens by name.”

Sources on Mockery “From the Wagons”

Schol. Demosthenes *coron.* 11

“About the jokes (*chleuas*) about his life. For he already knew that in the festal processions certain processioners are accustomed to rally (*apeskopton*) the others, that during the festival they play around, going about on wagons. And from this comes ‘from the wagons they outraged (*hubrizen*) me.’”

Schol. Aristophanes *Equit.* 547

“The Athenaia, a festival of the Athenians, in which poets contend, writing down some matter for the sake of laughter. Thus Demosthenes said ‘from the wagons.’ For some spoke from the wagons and recited the poems.”

Photius, *s.v. ta ek ton hamazon*

“About those mocking openingly. The things from the wagon: undisguised jokes (*skommôton*): for in Athens, during the Chous festival, the komists in the wagons mock (*eskoptôv*) the people they encounter and rail (*eloidoroun*) at them; and the same thing later at the Lenai.”

Plato, *Laws*, 637a

[the Spartan speaking]: “The rules about pleasures at Sparta seem to me the best in the world. For our law banished entirely from the land that institution which gives the most

occasion for men to fall into excessive pleasures and riotous and follies of every description; neither in the country nor in the cities controlled by Spartiates is a drinking-club to be seen nor any of the practices which belong to such and foster to the utmost all kinds of pleasure. Indeed there is not a man who would not punish at once and most severely any drunken reveller he chanced to meet with, nor would even the feast of Dionysus serve as an excuse to save him--a revel such as I once upon a time witnessed "on the wagons" in your country; and at our colony of Tarentum, too, saw the whole city drunk at the Dionysia. But with us no such thing is possible."

Corpus paroem. Graec. Ed. Leutsch and Schneidewin, Gottingen 1851. Appendix IV, 80. "The things from the wagon: with regard to licentious jokes (*skommatôn*) this thing (ie, the proverb) arouse. For in Athens, drunk men, during the Dionysiac festivals, go around reveling, and for a day those seated on the wagons joke (*skoptousi*) at quite everybody."

Suda, s.v. *pompeias kar pompeueiv*

"Processions and to procession, instead of railery (*loidorias*) and to rail (*loidorein*) – Demosthenes in his speech about Ctesiphon. Taken from the railing (*loidoroumenon*) at one another from the wagons during Dionysiac festivals."

Schol. Aristophanes, *Plut.* 1015

"From the wagon: for the Athenian women on wagons would lead the way to the Greater Eleusinia; and riding on the wagons, then they walked into the Musterion and mocked (*loidorouson*) one another in the road. For this was the custom."

Suda, s.v. *ta ek ton hamazôn skommatôn*

"About those mocking openly. For in Athens at the festival of the Choes those reveling on the wagons mocked and reviled those they met and they did the same later also in the Lenaia."

Schol. Aristophanes, *Nub.* 297

"The poets: since they are furnished with new wine... thus they sing their poems from wagons on the roads on which they are seated."

Schol. Luc. *Jup. Trag.* 44

First scholiast: "In the festivals of Dionysos in Athens, people riding in wagons would mock (*skoptôn*) each other and abuse (*eloidorounta*) each other a lot. From this customary hubridizing comes the expression 'from the wagons'."

Second scholiast: "In the festivals of Dionysos the celebrants mocked (*skoptô*) one another."

Schol. Luc. *Eun.* 2

"It is said that, according to custom, they hubridized each other, for in the Dionysiac festivals, from wagons they mocked (*skoptô*) each other."

Other Specified Religious Festivals

Boubastis

Herodotus, 2.60

“When the people are on their way to Bubastis, they go by river, a great number in every boat, men and women together. Some of the women make a noise with rattles, others play flutes all the way, while the rest of the women, and the men, sing and clap their hands. As they travel by river to Bubastis, whenever they come near any other town they bring their boat near the bank; then some of the women do as I have said, while some shout mockery (*tothadousi*) of the women of the town; others dance, and others stand up and lift their skirts. They do this whenever they come alongside any riverside town. But when they have reached Bubastis, they make a festival with great sacrifices, and more wine is drunk at this feast than in the whole year besides. It is customary for men and women (but not children) to assemble there to the number of seven hundred thousand, as the people of the place say.”

Antheateria

Bekker *Anecdota* 1.316 s.v. *There are certain Chytroi*

“A festival in Athens so named, in which it was possible to mock both others and especially those in government.”

Mysian Demeter

Paus. 7.27.9-10

“About sixty stades distant from Pellene is the Mysaeum, a sanctuary of the Mysian Demeter. It is said that it was founded by Mysius, a man of Argos, who according to Argive tradition gave Demeter a welcome in his home. There is a grove in the Mysaeum, containing trees of every kind, and in it rises a copious supply of water from springs. Here they also celebrate a seven days' festival in honor of Demeter. On the third day of the festival the men withdraw from the sanctuary, and the women are left to perform on that night the ritual that custom demands. Not only men are excluded, but even male dogs. On the following day the men come to the sanctuary, and the men and the women laugh (*geloti*) and jeer (*chhrontai kai skommasin*) at one another in turn.”

Sacrifice to Apollo at Anaphe

Apollon. Rh. 4.1719-30

Medea's handmaidens laugh at the heroes because they are making such a poor sacrifice (libations of water on burning wood) on a desolate island: “they could no longer restrain laughter within their bosoms...And the heroes delighted in the jest (*aischrois*) and attacked them with taunting words, and merry railing and contention flung to and fro were kindled among them. And from that sport of the heroes such scoffs do the women fling at the men in that island whenever they propitiate with sacrifices Apollo the gleaming god...”

Apollodorus 1.9.26

“So they founded an altar of Radiant Apollo, and having offered sacrifice they betook them to feasting; and twelve handmaids, whom Arete had given to Medea, jested

(*eskoptōv*) merrily with the chiefs; whence it is still customary for the women to jest (*skopteiv*) at the sacrifice.”

Konon, 49, “Apollo Aigletes”

“The inhabitants perform sacrifices with mockery (*tothasmos*)” because, rescued on the island, “Medea along with the women in her train, who were a present from her marriage with Iason, jesting (*paizousai*) after getting drunk, mocked the heroes in the night festival. And they jeered at the women in turn. From this time therefore the people of Anaphe... hold every year a festival in honor of Apollo Aigletes, taunting (*kertomountes*) each other in imitation of those people.”

Lindos

Lactantius, *div. inst.* I 21, 31-36.

“At Lindos, which is a town on Rhodes, sacred acts are performed in honor of Herakles, the rites of which are very different from the others, insofar as they are celebrated, not with *euphemia*, as the Greeks say, but with maledictions and execration, and they consider it a violation if ever amid their solemn rites a good word should happen to fall from anyone not on his guard. The following is the reason alleged for this, if, however, there can be any reason in the completely inane. When Herakles had been taken there and suffered hunger, he saw a plowman working and he asked him to sell him one of his heifers. The plowman, however, said that it could not be done since his every hope of tilling his land rested on the two beasts. Herakles, using his customary violence, since he could not get the one, killed the two. When the unhappy man saw his cows being slaughtered, he took vengeance on his injury with evil words, which was most gratifying to the elegant and urbane man. For, while he was preparing the meal for his companions and devouring the other man’s cattle, he listened to the plowman reviling him most sharply and was loud in laughter and jeering. But after it was agreed that divine honors be conferred upon Herakles out of admiration for his strength, an altar was erected to him.... And Herakles appointed and commanded the plowman himself to be his priest so that he might always use the same maledictions in the celebration of the rites, for he said that he had never dined more pleasantly. Now, these things are not sacred actions, but sacrilegious, in which that is considered holy which, if it were performed in other functions, would be most severely punished.”

Aegina

Herodotus, 5.83

“In the course of this struggle, [the Aeginetans] did the Epidaurians much damage and stole their images of Damia and Auxesia. These they took away and set them up in the middle of their own country at a place called Oea, about twenty furlongs distant from their city. Having set them up in this place they sought their favor with sacrifices and female choruses in the satirical and abusive mode. Ten men were appointed providers of a chorus for each of the deities, and the choruses aimed their raillery (*kakos*) not at any men but at the women of the country. The Epidaurians too had the same rites, and they have certain secret rites as well.”

Various Women’s Festivals

Schol. Luc., *Dialogue of the Courtesans* 7.4 (trans. N.J. Lowe, "Thesmophoria and Haloa: Myth, Physics and Mysteries," in *The Sacred and the Feminine in Ancient Greece*, ed. Sue Blundell and Margaret Williamson. London and New York: Routledge, 1998. pp. 149-173. 167-8.)

"Halóa: A festival at Athens of Demeter and Kore and of Dionysus, encompassing mysteries, held among the Athenians at the cutting of the vine and the tasting of the wine previously laid in storage. In these [subject missing] in the form of male privates are set out, which they explain as symbolic of the seed of men's generation, because Dionysus in making the gift of wine provided that stimulating frug as an incitement to sex. He gave it to Icarius, whom the shepards having also [?] slain through their ignorance of the effects of wine-drinking, and subsequently being driven mad on account first of their blasphemous impulse towards Dionysus, and secondly having remained under the very aspect of shame [?] - and the oracle commanded them to desist from their madness by fashioning clay genitals and dedicating them. This done, they were released from the curse, and the present festival commemorated the events. In it, there is also presented a women's *telete* at Eleusis, and many jokes and frivolities are uttered. The women go in alone, and may say what they wish; and indeed they do then say the most disgusting things to one another, and the prestesses approach the women secretly and into their ear urge them to commit adultery, as though it were some holy secret. All the women shout disgusting, blasphemous things at one another, handling the while indecent images of the body, male and female alike. Here there is a great deal of wine laid ready, and tables laden with all the victuals of earth and sea save those forbidden in the mysteries.... The Archons prepare the tables and leave them inside for the women, while they themselves depart and wait outside to show all visiting foreigners that civilizes foods originated with them and were communicated to all mankind by the,. Also laid on the table are private parts of both sexes fashioned of cake. It is called Halóa after the fruit of Dionysus, for *aloai* are where vines are grown."

Suda, s.v. *Sthnia*

"Stenia and Skira: women's festivals."

Cleomedes, *de motu circul. corp. cael.* 2.1

In criticizing Epicurus' language, Cleomedes writes: "some of his expressions one would say came from brothels, others are like the things said at Demetrian festivals by women celebrating the Thesmophoria"

Diod. Sic. 5.4.7

"And it is their custom during these days [of the Eleusis festival] to indulge in coarse language (*aischrologein*) as they associate one with another, the reason being that by such coarseness (*aischrologian*) the goddess, grieved though she was at the rape of Kore, burst into laughter."

Mythological Sources

Apollodorus 1.5.1

“Pluto fell in love with Persephone and with the help of Zeus carried her off secretly. But Demeter went about seeking her all over the earth with torches by night and day, and learning from the people of Hermion that Pluto had carried her off, she was wroth with the gods and quitted heaven, and came in the likeness of a woman to Eleusis. And first she sat down on the rock which has been named Laughless after her, beside what is called the Well of the Fair Dances; thereupon she made her way to Celeus, who at that time reigned over the Eleusinians. Some women were in the house, and when they bade her sit down beside them, a certain old crone, Iambe, joked at (*skophasa*) the goddess and made her smile. For that reason they say that the women break jests (*skoptein*) at the Thesmophoria.”

Appendix 5: Other Types of Ritual Mockery

This appendix lists the main categories of rituals featuring laughter or mockery which, for the reasons given in the body of the dissertation and expanded on here, I do not think comparable to Greek *aischrologia*. They are included in case the reader had expected to see them applied, and also because this Appendix's survey of the opinions towards laughter of the Christian Church provide the 'deep history' of the modern failure to understand *aischrologia*'s role in Greek religion.

- I. Rituals of Conflict
- II. Rituals of Reversal
- III. The Joking Relationship
- IV. Laughter in the Christian Church
- V. *Risus Paschalis*
- VI. Holi
- VII. Modern Laughter

I. Rituals of Conflict

Gluckman describes "rituals of conflict," during which a people ceremoniously mock-rebels against its leader, usually by means of traditional songs that question his ability to rule.⁷⁶⁴ These songs may contain precisely similar insults to those thrown out in

⁷⁶⁴ "Rituals of conflict": see Max Gluckman, *Rituals of Rebellion in South-East Africa*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1952 and also his *Custom and Conflict in Africa*. Glencoe: The Free Press, 1959, the chapter on "The License in Ritual," pp. 109-136. The theory of these rituals has been rediscussed by Robert Dirks, "Annual Rituals of

Aristophanic comedy against Athens' rulers; however, they are not comparable to *aischrologia* because they are not meant as actual criticisms, because *aischrologia* seems to have had little political content, and because these mock-rebellious insults are delivered in a mournful attitude, not a joyful one.⁷⁶⁵

II. Rituals of Reversal

Another set of ritual behaviors that have been compared to *aischrologia* are those known as "rituals of reversal."⁷⁶⁶ They can include the reversal of speech or actions – eating with one's left hand, walking backwards, and so on – or the transposition of social roles, most usually accompanied by transvestism in dress. Some of these reversals accompany ritual laughter; for instance, Hopi and Navaho rituals clowns engage in these types of reversed actions. Hoffman has proposed that ritual reversals were also present during Greek festivals in honor of Dionysos, since several literary sources mention ephebes dressed in women's' clothing leading Dionysiac processions.⁷⁶⁷ There are close

Conflict," *American Anthropologist*, 90.4 (1988), pp. 856-870. Also interesting is the "the great day of abuse" described by Eva L.R. Meyerowitz, *The Sacred State of the Akan*. London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1951. 153-156. The standard summary of the phenomenon is Edward Norbeck, "African Rituals of Conflict," *American Anthropologist*, 65.6 (1963), pp. 1254-1279.

⁷⁶⁵ Mourning attitude: see Pierre L. Van den Berghe, "Institutional Licence and Normative Stability," *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, 3 (1963), pp. 413-423.

⁷⁶⁶ The most recent survey is Barbara A. Babcock, ed., *The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978. Versnel has used the theory of "rituals of reversal" to analyze the Kronia, Anthesteria, and Saturnalia. H. S. Versnel, *Inconsistencies in Greek and Roman Religion, Vol. 2*. Leiden and New York: Brill, 1990.

⁷⁶⁷ Hoffman, "Ritual License and the Cult of Dionysos." One such procession was the *Oschophoria*, during which two ephebes, dressed as women, led a male chorus and a

parallels in several African cultures for dressing boys undergoing initiation in female clothing, presumably as a visible signal of their liminal state.⁷⁶⁸ However, humor and laughter are not usually a part of these initiations, and it is not clear whether the ephebes in Hoffman's sources are cross-dressing as part of their initiation or rather as part of a Dionysiac ritual, as he argues. Thus, though reversal behaviors may be found in Greece as in other cultures, it will not be sufficient to equate ritual reversal with ritual laughter. Some larger factor may explain them both.

band of maidens from a temple of Dionysos in Athens to the temple of Athena Skiras at Phaleron (Plut. *Thes.* 22.4 and 23; Hysech, s.v. *oschophoroi*; s.v. *oschophorion*; Philochorus, *FGH* 328 f 14-16). 94. Ephebes dressed in female clothing for a komos following Dionysia are described in Philostratus, *Imag.* 1.2. As well, during the Anthesteria, some of the mockers "from the wagon" dressed as women and performed 'womanly' dances. For sources, see Burkert, *Homo Necans*, 229 n. 18. Hoffman, 95. Hoffman maintains that the several vase-paintings showing symposiastic men in female clothing (known as "Anakreonic" scenes) are straight-forward representations of cross-dressing Dionysiac symposiasts, but it seems doubtful that these vases should be read as if they were snap-shots – they could well be parodic – and, secondly, that they can be identified as particularly Dionysiac celebrations, as distinct from any non-ritual parties. Hoffman, 96.

⁷⁶⁸ Among the Turkana some boys wear their hair like that of girls: Pamela Gulliver and P.H. Gulliver, *The Central Nilo-Hamites*. London, International African Institute, 1953. 76. Midobi boys braid their hair like women when approaching puberty: B.Z. and C.G. Seligman, *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan*. London: Routledge, 1932. 450. When recovering from circumcision, Masai boys wear the dress of a married woman: George Huntingford, *The Southern Nilo-Hamites*. London, International African Institute, 1953. 116. Similar adoptions of articles of female dress also occur at the initiations of boys of the Gisu, Moro, Nyima, Nipe, Kipsigis, Nandi, and Wolof: J. S. La Fontaine, *The Gisu of Uganda*. London, International African Institute, 1959. 42 (Gisu); S. F. Nadel, *The Nuba: An Anthropological Study of the Hill Tribes in Kordofan*. London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1947. 242 (Moro), 410 (Nyima); S. F. Nadel, *Nupe Religion*. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954. 80, 113, 218 (Nupe); J.G. Peristiany, *The Social Institutions of the Kipsigis*. London: Routledge, 1939. 23 (Kipsigis); H.S. Fehlinger, *Sexual Life of Primitive People*. London: A. & C. Black, 1921. 110 (Nandi); George Huntingford, *The Southern Nilo-Hamites*. London, International African Institute, 1953. 30 (Nandi); Geoffrey Gorer, *Africa Dances*. London: John Lehmann, 1949, 36 (Wolof). For a summary and discussion of instances transvestism during initiation, see Edward Norbeck, "African Rituals of Conflict," *American Anthropologist*, 65.6 (1963), pp. 1254-1279. 1257-1258 (from which this list is taken).

III. The Joking Relationship

Another type of ritual joking is that which is known to anthropologists as the “joking relationship.”⁷⁶⁹ These relationships are found in many African cultures. Partners are expected to tease, joke with, and engage in horseplay and practical jokes with one another, or to permit, without complaint, the teasing of some joking partner. For example, in Gogo culture there is interclan joking as well as affinal joking between grandparent and grandchild, maternal uncles and their nephews, and between cross-cousins.⁷⁷⁰ Such joking often involves scatology and sexual matters. These joking relationships are not completely comparable to *aischrologia* because they operate much more in the social sphere than the religious. Indeed, the most cogent analysis of joking relationships has been that which sees them as attempts to solve social problems. For example, the Gogo organize their social universe by patrilineal lineages, and have consequent difficulties deciding on the proper types of behavior to those outside of this lineage – both other clans, which have separate patrilineal lineages, and affines, who enter social relations through marriage, that is, through females, not the male line. Thus, joking relations exist between people whose relationships are not otherwise clarified within the Gogo social

⁷⁶⁹ The first scholar to bring together various reports and propose a general theory of the joking relationship was A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, “On Joking Relationships,” *Africa*, 13.3 (1940), pp. 195-210; see also his “A Further Note on Joking Relationships,” *Africa*, 19.2 (1949), pp. 133-140. Another important early article on the subject was that of R. E. Moreau, “Joking Relationships in Tanganyika,” *Africa*, 14, No. 7. (Jul., 1944), pp. 386-400. For comparative, cross-cultural studies of these joking relationships, see Richard W. Howell, *Teasing Relationships*. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley Publishing Company, 1973; and George Peter Murdock, *Social Structure*. New York: Macmillan, 1949.

⁷⁷⁰ On the Gogo, see Peter Rigby, “Joking Relationships, Kin Categories, and Clanship among the Gogo,” *Africa*, 38.2 (1968), pp. 133-155.

system.⁷⁷¹ This ongoing social purpose means that joking relationships are not the best comparisons for the limited, festival-oriented rituals of *aischrologia*.

IV. Laughter in the Christian Church

Another, even more dissimilar type of ritual laughter is that found within the Christian Church.⁷⁷² Laughter was of concern to the Christian religion, just as *aischrologia* was to the Greek, but in a very different way. From the time of the Church Fathers, Christianity's official stance on laughter had been that it was connected to the body and unrestrained sensuality, and as such was condemned.⁷⁷³ This position may be

⁷⁷¹ Peter Rigby, "Joking Relationships, Kin Categories, and Clanship among the Gogo," *Africa*, 38.2 (1968), pp. 133-155. 152.

⁷⁷² The issue of laughter in ancient Judaism is too disputed to take up here. There are even arguments over whether or not the Hebrew Bible is ever humorous: see Yehuda Radday, "Sex and Women in Biblical Narrative Humor," *Humor* 8.4 (1995), pp. 363-384; Hershey H. Friedman, "Humor in the Hebrew Bible," *Humor* 13.3 (2000), pp. 257-285; John Morreall, "Sarcasm, Irony, Wordplay, and Humor in the Hebrew Bible: A Response to Hershey Friedman," *Humor* 14.3 (2001), pp. 293-301.

⁷⁷³ The Desert Fathers were particularly insistent in linking laughter and sexuality: impurity was defined as 'touching the body, laughing and talking without restraint,' (*Les Sentences des Pères du Désert*. Solesmes, Abbaye Saint-Pierre, 1966. 142); it was thought typical of people without temperance both to have a 'shameless glance' and laugh 'immoderately' (*Syncletica* 2; *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, trans. Benedicta Ward. London: Mowbrays, 1975, no. 893). For an examination of laughter in early Christianity, see Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, *Laughing Gods, Weeping Virgins: Laughter in the History of Religion*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997, pp. 60-77; Gilhus also discusses laughter in the Medieval church (pp. 78-101). Gilhus diagnoses the fundamental opposition of laughter and Christian religion: "When religious symbolism centres around literal texts and on an ideal human body, marked by chastity and a continent life, laughter is bound to become a stranger." 58. Saroglou has proposed that the Christian religion's historical distrust of the comic is not accidental, but rather that, psychologically, the personality traits of religiousness and sense of humor are not compatible, the latter is linked with traits of "incongruity, ambiguity, possibility of nonsense, low dogmatism and low authoritarianism, playfulness,

seen in statements such as that of St. Ignatius Loyola: “Do not laugh and do not say anything which arouses laughter,”⁷⁷⁴ or, even earlier and with reference to Aristotle, Clement of Alexandria’s attempts to limit laughter with the argument that “[i]t is true that man is an animal who can laugh; but it is not true that he therefore should laugh at everything.”⁷⁷⁵ The Church Fathers agreed that it was not proper for virgins to laugh.⁷⁷⁶ Laughter, even ritualistic laughter, does appear in Church history, but it does so in festivals often condemned by Church authorities: Carnival, the Feast of Fools, the Feast of the Ass, the comic interludes in Medieval mystery plays (most famously, the Wakefield *Second Shepard’s Play*).⁷⁷⁷ Bakhtin, in his analysis of the phenomenon of

spontaneity, attraction to novelty and risk, lack of truthfulness and finality, affective and moral disengagement, loss of control and order as implied by emotionality, and finally transgression, especially transgression of prohibitions related to aggression/ dominance and sexuality.” Vassilis Saroglou, “Religion and Sense of Humor: An *a priori* Incompatibility? Theoretical Considerations from a Psychological Perspective,” *Humor* 15.2 (2002), pp. 191-214.

⁷⁷⁴ “Additions to first week of Spiritual Exercises,” in St. Ignatius Loyola, *Ecrits*, ed. M. Giuliani, Paris 1991, pp. 98-9.

⁷⁷⁵ Clement, *Paidagogos*, 2.46.

⁷⁷⁶ N. Adkin, “The Fathers on Laughter,” *Orpheus*, 6.1, (1985), pp. 149-52; I.M. Resnick, “*Risus monasticus*: Laughter and Medieval Monastic Culture,” *Revue Benedictine*, 97 (1987), pp. 90-100.

⁷⁷⁷ Scholars have proposed that such Christian festivals were descended from ancient festivals such as the Saturnalia since at least the 6th c. AD, when various theologians who proposed that the Feast of Fools derived from an ancient festival which they called the *Cervulus* or *Cervula* (see discussion, for example, in *Vita S. Eligii*, lib. 2. cap. 15. or Bishop Faustinus, *Serm. in Kalend. Jan.*; Backman, 57). A comprehensive discussion of the history of this idea is that of E. Louis Backman, *Religious Dances in the Christian Church and in Popular Medicine*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1952. Backman points out that there is no evidence for a celebration of the *Cervulus* or *Cervula* in actual ancient literature, and argues that the Feast of Fools and its ilk originated among the Christians, though certain features may have been taken from pagan feasts. 58. For a summary of similar attempts by Renaissance scholars to link Christian Carnival to ancient rituals, see

Carnival, thought that it was a temporary rebellion against the authority of the church.⁷⁷⁸

Subsequent scholars have disputed this, most notably Gilhus, who has carried out the only study of humorous rituals within the Church which attempts to place these rituals within the structure of Christian belief. Gilhus concludes that joking about and burlesquing of elements of Christian belief demonstrated “absolute confidence” in the truth of these beliefs.⁷⁷⁹ The Feast of the Ass, during which the lower clergy conducted a mock-mass in celebration of an ass, is in this analysis an authentic Christian devotion to an important player in the story of Christ’s birth, taken as an opportunity for a bit of fun.⁷⁸⁰ Even the celebrants themselves argued that they meant no disrespect, most famously during a 1444 discussion of the Feast of Fools at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Paris:

...we act thus in jest and not seriously, as has been the custom of old, so that the foolishness innate in us can flow out once a year and evaporate.

Natalie Zemon Davis, “The Reasons of Misrule: Youth Groups and Charivaris in Sixteenth-Century France,” *Past and Present*, 50 (1971), pp. 41-75. Reprinted as “The Reasons of Misrule” in her *Society and Culture in Early Modern France: Eight Essays*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975, pp. 97-123. 46. A more complete bibliography on proposed connections between Carnival and the Saturnalia is given by Giorgio Brugnoli, “Il carnevale e i Saturnalia,” *La Ricerca Folklorica*, 10 (1984), pp. 49-54. On the Mystery Plays, see Frederik T. Wood, “The Comic Elements in the English Mystery Plays, I,” *Neophilologus*, 25.1 (1939) pp. 39-48; and “The comic elements in the English mystery plays, II,” *Neophilologus*, 25.3 (1940), pp.194-206. For a fascinating analysis of many lesser instances of laughing, smiling, and joking in medieval theology and religious behavior, see Jeannine Horowitz and Sophia Menache, *L'Humour en Chaire: Le Rire dans l'Eglise Médiévale*. Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1994.

⁷⁷⁸ M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. H. Iswolsky (Cambridge, Mass., 1968).

⁷⁷⁹ Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, *Laughing Gods, Weeping Virgins: Laughter in the History of Religion*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997, pp. 88-99; and “Carnival in Religion: The Feast of Fools in France,” *Numen*, 37.1 (1990), pp. 24-52.

⁷⁸⁰ Ingvild Salid Gilhus, “Carnival in Religion: The Feast of Fools in France,” *Numen*, 37.1 (1990), pp. 24-52.

Do not wineskins and barrels burst if their bungs are not loosened once in a while? Even so, we are old wineskins and worn barrels; the wine of wisdom fermenting within us, which we hold in tightly all year in the service of God, might flow out uselessly, if we did not discharge it ourselves now and then with games and foolishness. Emptied through play, we may become stronger afterwards to retain wisdom.⁷⁸¹

Whether one follows Bakhtin in seeing these occasions as rebellious, or Gilhus and others in seeing them as still-respectful occasions for merry-making, the difference from Greek *aischrologia* is evident. First, *aischrologia* was, though it could be disapproved of by philosophers such as Plato or Aristotle, firmly entrenched in religious ritual. The higher religious officials of Greece participated directly in aischrologic rituals (the Head Archon and his wife performing the *hieros gamos* during the Anthesteria, for example), while only laypeople and minor clergy braved the higher clergy's disapproval to organize occasions for Christian laughter. Secondly, and consequently, the Christian occasions of laughter, whether rebellious or therapeutic, do not seem to have been positive contributions to religion – laughter did not *do* anything within the Church.⁷⁸² This is with the possible exception of *risus paschalis*, which will shortly be discussed. *Aischrologia*,

⁷⁸¹ J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, ccvii, p 1171, translation Natalie Zemon Davis, "The Reasons of Misrule: Youth Groups and Charivaris in Sixteenth-Century France," *Past and Present*, 50 (1971), pp. 41-75. 47. This "safety-valve" explanation is commonly adopted by modern scholars; see, for example, E.K. Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903, writing that the Feast of Fools "was largely an ebullition of the natural lout beneath the cassock." 325.

⁷⁸² If one follows Gilhus' explanation of occasions such as the Feast of the Ass as in actuality celebrations of Christian doctrine, this thought still holds, for here the laughter itself is not doing anything specially particular for the celebration, which honors the same things as do 'serious' ceremonies.

by contrast, had some positive purpose and value within Greek religion – it accomplished something, and thus had to be encouraged by religious officials.⁷⁸³

V. *Risus Paschalis*

There are several other instances of known ritualistic laughter that cannot be usefully compared with *aischrologia*, for, though there may be similarities in the actions, their antecedents and purposes have been forgotten.

One of these is *risus paschalis*, “Easter laughter.” At least through the later middle ages, European priests would tell humorous anecdotes during the Easter homily. Propp claimed that these were “frequently obscene,” but he seems to be relying on secondary sources, while the stories contained in the only full-length study of the subject are not sexual; rather, they are intended to inculcate a moral message in an allegorical, humorous manner.⁷⁸⁴ Propp thought that *risus paschalis* was an example of “phallic

⁷⁸³ Nor can Carnival be compared with Greek Old Comedy, since it can be convincingly argued that Old Comedy was a true criticism of the political authorities, while Carnival always inherently supports the authorities: Anthony T. Edwards, “Historicizing the Popular Grotesque: Bakhtin’s *Rabelais and His World* and Attic Old Comedy,” in *Bakhtin and the Classics*, ed. R. Bracht Branham. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2202. pp. 27-55.

⁷⁸⁴ V. Propp, “Ritual Laughter in Folklore,” trans. Maxine L. Bronstein and Lee Haring, in *Theory and History of Folklore*, ed. Anatoly Liberman. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984. pp. 124-146. 127. The full-length study, focusing on Germany, is Volker Wendland, *Ostermärchen und Ostergelächter*. Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1980. Many of the stories feature anthropomorphized animals in Aesopian fables, or poke fun at corrupt or religious figures, for example, the story of “The Exchanged Relics” is about a seller of relics and a tricky innkeeper (154-156), and in “St. Peter at Heaven’s Gate,” the saint abuses a priest who confesses to taking money from his parishioners (156). For *risus paschalis*, see also: Claudio Bernardi, *La Drammaturgia della Settimana Santa in Italia*. Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1991. 151-153. Bernardi’s discussion is mainly a rephrasing of Propp’s theories; Charles Read Baskerville, “Dramatic aspects of medieval folk festivals in England,” *Studies in Philology*, 17 (1920), pp. 19-87; Hans Fluck, “Der

agricultural rites,” taking place on Easter not only to celebrate Christ’s Resurrection but also the resurrection of Nature in the spring. He bases this on the 1518 humanistic treatise *De risu paschali epistola apologetica*, whose author says that he will not include in his discussion the things done outside the church during the night in the fields because they were *obsceniores*, obscene.⁷⁸⁵ Fluck interpreted this vague description along the lines of more definite descriptions of copulation in fields for agricultural fertility,⁷⁸⁶ and it is tempting to link the phenomenon to spring agricultural rituals; however, there is simply too little surviving evidence to understand *risus paschalis*. In this case, we have lost reasons for practices for which the participants may well have had satisfactory reasons or rationales.

Christianity’s use of humor may not be directly comparable with *aischrologia*, but there are other types of ancient visual humor similar to it, especially similar uses of mockery on behalf of opposing factions of Greek religious thought. Though different

Risus Paschalis,” *Archiv fur Religionswissenschaft*, 31 (1934), pp. 188-212. Fluck is of the opinion that merriment was needed after long fast of Lent – hence paschal laughter. Similar humorous sermons, though most not traceable to an Easter context, can be found in Sander L. Gilman, *The Parodic Sermon in European Perspective: Aspects of Liturgical Parody from the Middle ages to the Twentieth Century*. Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1974.

⁷⁸⁵ Ecolampadius, *De risu paschali epistola apologetica* – “An Apology for Easter Laughter” – Basel, 1518. V. Propp, “Ritual Laughter in Folklore,” trans. Maxine L. Bronstein and Lee Haring, in *Theory and History of Folklore*, ed. Anatoly Liberman. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984. pp. 124-146. 138.

⁷⁸⁶ His specific example was Demeter and Iasion copulating in a field in Argos (Homer, *Odysseus* 5.125 and Hesiod, *Theogony* 900). V. Propp, “Ritual Laughter in Folklore,” trans. Maxine L. Bronstein and Lee Haring, in *Theory and History of Folklore*, ed. Anatoly Liberman. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984. pp. 124-146. 145. His justification is that “[i]t matters little what exactly was done; for we are interested in the character of the actions, which is clear even without details, and in the beliefs underlying them.” V. Propp, “Ritual Laughter in Folklore,” trans. Maxine L. Bronstein and Lee Haring, in *Theory and History of Folklore*, ed. Anatoly Liberman. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984. pp. 124-146. 138.

from *aischrologia*, it seems worthwhile to include it here, for a demonstration that humor may have had various roles in Greek religion.

The vases in question are several which feature a humorous or parodic treatment of famous sinners in the Underworld, most notably Sisyphos. (fig. 8.5.1-8.5.5) Greek beliefs about the Underworld have been intensively studied, with the contributions of both literary and visual evidence.⁷⁸⁷ The scenes on Attic painted vases have so far provided relatively little information about these beliefs, partly because they do not often feature Underworld scenes and partly because those that do are difficult to interpret.⁷⁸⁸

⁷⁸⁷ Some notable general discussions of Greek thoughts about the afterlife are Georg Petzl, *Antike Diskussionen über die beiden Nekyiai. Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie*, 2. Meisenheim am Glan, A. Hain, 1969; W.F. Jackson Knight, *Elysion: On Ancient Greek and Roman Beliefs concerning Life after Death*. London: Rider, 1970; C. Sourvinou-Inwood, "To Die and Enter the House of Hades: Homer, Before and After," in J. Whaley ed., *Mirrors of Mortality: Studies in the Social History of Death*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981. pp. 15-39; C. Sourvinou-Inwood, "A Trauma in Flux: Death in the 8th Century and After," in R. Hagg ed., *The Greek Renaissance of the Eighth Century B.C.: Tradition and Innovation*. Stockholm: P. Åströms, 1983. pp 33-48; N.J. Richardson, "Early Greek Views about Life after Death," in P.E. Easterling and J.V. Muir, eds., *Greek Religion and Society*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985. pp. 50-66; Ian Morris, "Attitudes toward Death in Archaic Greece," *ClAn*, 8 (1989), pp. 296-320; J.N. Bremmer, "The Soul, Death and the Afterlife in Early and Classical Greece," in J.M. Bremer et al., eds., *Hidden Futures: Death and Immortality in Ancient Egypt, Anatolia, the Classical, Biblical and Arabic-Islamic World*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1994. pp. 91-106; B. Poortman, "Death and Immortality in Greek Philosophy from the Presocratics to the Hellenistic Era," in J.M. Bremer et al., eds., *Hidden Futures: Death and Immortality in Ancient Egypt, Anatolia, the Classical, Biblical and Arabic-Islamic World*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1994. pp. 197-220. Scholarship using visual evidence has been focused mainly on funerary sculpture; a valuable contribution here is that of Kosmopoulou. The most extended attempts to analyze the belief-system of a work of visual art have been those connected with Polygnotos' *nekyia* fresco: : Emanuel Loewy, *Polygnot, ein buch von griechischer malerei*. Vienna: A. Schroll, 1929; Carl Robert, "Die Nekyia des Polygnot," *HallWPr*, 16 (1892), pp. 65-68. A more recent look at the subject is Mark D. Stansbury-O'Donnell, "Polygnotos's Nekyia: A Reconstruction and Analysis," *AJA* 94.2 (1990), pp. 213-235.

⁷⁸⁸ The most notable, although perhaps over-ambitious, attempt to use vase-painting as evidence for afterlife beliefs has been Herbert Hoffman's *Sexual and Asexual Pursuit: A*

These vases, in particular, have received little scholarly attention and have not been used as sources for Greek thought about the afterlife, since their comic nature seems to have prevented their application to such a serious subject as the Underworld.

Leaving aside scenes of Herakles' capture of Cerberus, which seems to have been treated as merely another of his Labors rather than as a specifically Underworld-related scene, the most common figure in Underworld-related vases from both Archaic and Classical Greek art is that of Sisyphos undergoing his punishment. (fig 9.13) Sisyphos was a mythical king of Corinth, and ancient authors agree that his fate in the Underworld was to be required to roll a large rock up a hill; every time he neared the top, the stone escaped his grip and fell to the bottom again.⁷⁸⁹ Ancient authors disagree about the reason

Structuralist Approach to Greek Vase Painting. London: Royal Anthropological Institute, 1977. Some beliefs are also deduced from vase imagery in Emily Vermeule, *Aspects of Death in Early Greek Art and Poetry*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979. As for individual vases or painters, attention has been paid to the imagery of some of Sotades' funerary vases (London, British Museum, D5, BA # 209459; D6, BA # 209458; and D7, BA # 209460): see L. Burn, "Honey Pots: Three White-Ground Cups by the Sotades Painter," *AntK* 28 (1985) 93-105. H. Hoffmann, "From Charos to Charon: Some Notes on the Human Encounter with Death in Attic Red-Figured Vase-Painting," *Visible Religion* 4-5 (1985-1986), pp. 173-194. 182. Two other vases with idyllic scenes have been thought to represent the Isles of the Blessed (Athens, National Museum, 1435 and 1333): S. Karouzou, "Ἡρώες αγνοί σ' έναν αττικό κρατήρα," *ArchDelt*, 19 (1964), pp. 1-16; Karouzou, "Une tombe de Tanagra," *BCH* 95 (1971), pp. 109-45. Simon has instead interpreted these vases as representations of seasons: E. Simon, "Attische Monatsbilder," *Jdl*, 80 (1965), pp. 105-23; Simon, *Festivals of Attica: An Archaeological Commentary*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983. 82-83. For a discussion of all these vases, see Angeliki Kosmopoulou, "A Funerary Base from Kallithea: New Light on Fifth-Century Eschatology," *AJA*, 102.3 (1998), pp. 531-545. 545. Another Underworld-related vase-painting to have received much attention is the name-vase of the Niobid Painter, though precise interpretation of the scene remains illusive: see Erika Simon, "Polygnotan Painting and the Niobid Painter," *AJA*, 67.1 (1963), pp. 43-62; Timothy J. McNiven, "Odysseus on the Niobid Krater," *JHS*, 109 (1989), pp. 191-198.

⁷⁸⁹ Hom. *Odyssey*, 11.593-600 is our earliest description of Sisyphos' punishment, but does not give a reason for it.

for this punishment. Some explain that he was impious.⁷⁹⁰ Most agree that he told Asopos, the father of Aegina, a nymph whom Zeus had carried off, the identity of her abductor, upon which an angry Zeus sought to kill him.⁷⁹¹ In the most detailed version, that of Pherekydes, Zeus sent Thanatos to fetch Sisyphos, but Sisyphos captured and bound Thanatos.⁷⁹² With Death a captive, no one could die. Finally, Ares was sent to free Thanatos, but Sisyphos had evolved another plan: he had told his wife, Merope, not to give him proper burial rites. Once in the Underworld, he pretended outrage at this neglect and asked Hades for permission to return to life to complain.⁷⁹³ Sisyphos, of course, did not return to the Underworld as he had promised, and lived until he died of old age. It was then that his punishment was assigned, in order to prevent him from escaping again.⁷⁹⁴ Sourvinou-Inwood interprets this punishment as symbolically related to his crime, since its futile motions up and down reflect Sisyphos' illicit movements between the upper and lower worlds.⁷⁹⁵

⁷⁹⁰ Hyginus says that he was punished for impiety, since he begot two sons on his brother's daughter because of his hate for his brother: Hyg. *Fab.* 60.

⁷⁹¹ Apollodorus, 1.85, Pausanias, 2.5.1, and the schol. on Hom. *Iliad*, 1.180 agree that Sisyphos was punished for telling Aegina's father Asopos about Zeus.

⁷⁹² The earliest reference to Sisyphos' escape is in Alkeios (frg. 38a Voigt), though this fragment does not describe its circumstances.

⁷⁹³ In other versions, it was Persephone who granted the favor: Theognis 1.701-12.

⁷⁹⁴ Pherekydes *FGrH* 3 F 119. A scholiast on Pindar adds that it was the god Hermes who had to bring Sisyphos back to the Underworld after his escape, and that he was punished specifically for having deceived Hades: Schol. rec. Pind. *O.* 1.97, p. 38 Boeckh.

⁷⁹⁵ Sourvinou-Inwood, 'Crime and Punishment,' 52. For other discussions of the nature and meaning of Sisyphos' punishment, see Nilsson, *GGR*, I, 3rd ed., 677; Nelly Tsouyopoulos, *Strafe im frühgriechischen Denken*. Freiburg and Munich: K. Alber, 1966.

Whatever the precise reason for his punishment, Sisyphus was evidently one of the most famous sinners in the Underworld, perhaps because of all its inhabitants he had tried the hardest to escape. His particular renown is evident from vase-painting, where he often appears in scenes of the Underworld. There are at least 14 known examples of these scenes of Sisyphos, rolling his rock, in company with other Underworld figures; they are all black-figure amphorae, dated c. 530-470 BC.⁷⁹⁶ That the majority of these vases are painted in black-figure after the introduction of red-figure (in c. 525 BC) suggests that at least some of them may have been made for funerary use, since ritual vessels often maintain traditional methods (as is the case for Panathenaic amphorae in black-figure, for example).

Since Sisyphos clearly operates on these vases as a representative of the Underworld, his appearance in different contexts or roles comes as something of a surprise. In the period c. 510-490 BC, Sisyphos and references to Sisyphos appear on a series of vases related not to the funerary sphere, but to the symposium. The most striking of these is a vase painted c. 490 BC, which leaves no doubt that Sisyphos could, in some

52-7; Wassiliki Felten, *Attische Unterweltdarstellungen des VI. und V. Jh. v. Chr.* Munich: Fink, 1975. 27-39.

⁷⁹⁶ Sisyphos appears in such Underworld scenes at least 14 known bf amphorae, dated c. 530-480/70 BC: Munich, Antikensammlungen, 1493 (c. 530 BC); Munich, Antikensammlungen, J576 (c. 530 BC); Orvieto, Museo Civico, Coll. Faina, 124 (520-510 BC); Berlin, Staal. Mus., 1844 (c. 520-510 BC); Leiden, Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, XVI45 (c. 510 BC); London, British Museum, B261 (c. 510 BC); Munich, Antikensammlungen, 1549 (c. 510 BC); Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, H2490 (c. 510 BC); Bologna, Museo Civico Archeologico, T365 (c. 510 BC); Paris, Musée du Louvre, F382 (c. 510 BC); Tübingen, Eberhard-Karls-Univ., Arch. Inst., S.10 1507A-B (c. 500 BC); St. Louis (MO), coll. Gay H. Cone, on loan in Art Mus. (c. 500 BC); Münster, private coll. (500-490 BC); San Antonio (TX), Art Museum, 91.80G (500-490 BC); Bucarest, National History Museum, 03331 (480-470 BC).

circles, be treated comically. (fig. 8.5.1) This vase is a krater, the symposiastic vessel *par excellence*, now in Warsaw, and shows on both sides a procession of reveling symposiasts.⁷⁹⁷ They are engaged in a *komos*, making their way home after the end of the party, dancing and carrying walking sticks and musical instruments. One of these symposiasts is doing something unusual: he rolls a large rock (identifiable by the conventional dark markings that signify its craggy texture) up what seems to be a piece of a hill. In action, he imitates Sisyphos; rather, since his companions and dress, or lack thereof, show him to be a symposiast, he performs a parody of Sisyphos' punishment (since one type of parody is the application to an inappropriate subject of the characteristic features or actions of another subject). Here, then, Sisyphos appears as a symposiast, not as a symbol of punishment, and on a vase which was likely used during a symposium rather than made exclusively for funerary purposes. Why this change of context and role?

This vase has received relatively little attention. Beazley merely describes the youth who "plays the part of Sisyphos" as "odd."⁷⁹⁸ The vase's first publication was by Neugebauer, who explained the situation as a symposiastic game, citing texts that describe the symposiast who wanted to leave first as being "punished" by the rest.⁷⁹⁹ Not mentioned by Neugebauer, but similar, are several contemporary drinking cups and lekythoi showing men and youths holding stones, as well as several showing a youth or a

⁷⁹⁷ Warsaw, National Museum, 200452.

⁷⁹⁸ *ARV*² 243, no. 5.

⁷⁹⁹ K.A. Neugebauer, *Antiken in deutschen Privatbestiz*, Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1938, p 39, pl. 69. For the symposiarch's power to "punish" other symposiasts, see Navarre, *Daremborg-Saglio*, IV, 1908, pp. 1579-1581, s.v. "Symposium" p. 1580.

man rolling a stone.⁸⁰⁰ This latter type survives in three known drinking cups, all painted c. 510 BC, whose interior tondo show a figure who is either Sisyphos or a symposiast imitating Sisyphos.⁸⁰¹ (fig. 8.5.2-8.5.4) If the figures are indeed Sisyphos himself, the change in his iconography, from upright to hunched and bent, would in itself be a comic exaggeration and caricature of his toils. Oakley connects these figures to the one on the Warsaw krater, proposing that they are all symposiasts performing sympotic play.⁸⁰² It is impossible to say whether or not symposiasts required each other to carry or roll large rocks, though it seems unlikely: Sisyphos' punishment is a superhuman task, far above the strength of ordinary men. Neither is it probable that the streets of Athens were littered with such convenient large stones. More importantly, even if the figures are indeed undergoing playful punishment, this does not explain why it is that an imitation of Sisyphos in particular was chosen.

Dobrowolski has written the most on the vase, having published an article suggesting that Sisyphos here stands for the power of reason (since he was famed for his

⁸⁰⁰ Paris, Musée du Louvre, G96; St. Petersburg, Hermitage, 6785; Athens, Kerameikos 8287; Bucarest, Hist. Mus., 01188. In consideration of these examples, Oakley writes that the figure on the fragmentary in Rome and Heidelberg might be another such youth engaged in sympotic play, not Sisyphos.

⁸⁰¹ Paris, Musée du Louvre, G16; fragmentary cup, Rome, Mus. Naz. Etrusco di Villa Giulia and Heidelberg, Ruprecht-Karls-Universitat, 46-47; and Athens, National Museum, 18722. The figure on the Athens cup could also be Theseus lifting the rock. Paola Zancani Montuoro, "Heraion alla Face del Sele: Altre Metope del 'Primo Thesauros'," *Atti e Memorie della Società Magna Grecia*, 5 (1964), pp. 57-95. 66, identifies this figure as Sisyphos, while C. Sourvinou-Inwood, 'Theseus Lifting the Rock and a Cup near the Pithos Painter', *JHS*, 91 (1971), pp. 94-109 argues that it is Theseus. Since the similar figure appears with a full beard on the Paris cup, I would rather identify this iconography as showing Sisyphos or a parody of Sisyphos.

⁸⁰² *LIMC* 7.1 s.v. Sisyphos I 786.

cunning) and that the symposiasts are thus making fun of reason, which was happily abandoned in favor of drunken revelry during the symposium.⁸⁰³ Influenced by Camus, Dobrowolski proposed that Sisyphos could be a symbol of the infinite everyday labors that the celebrant forgets during the symposium.⁸⁰⁴ Dobrowolski's insistence that the vase is poking fun at Sisyphos and what he stands for is a reasonable and probably inescapable conclusion. On the other hand, Dobrowolski's interpretation of Sisyphos as an exponent of the power of reason is disputable. Several texts do mention Sisyphos' cunning, but to show him rolling the rock is to show him outwitted.⁸⁰⁵ It is much more in accord with the iconographical tradition of Sisyphos to understand him not as a symbol of reason, but rather as a representation of the punishments of the afterlife – even when he is parodied.⁸⁰⁶

⁸⁰³ Witold Dobrowolski, "Sisyphe et le Komos," *Bulletin de Musée National de Varsovie*, 17 (1976), pp. 97-107. trans. Zsolt Kiss. 104-105. See also, on this vase, Dobrowolski, *Wazy Greckie*, II, *Attycka Ceramika Czerwonofiguralowa* (Warsaw, 1982), pl.8 (A); and Dobrowolski, "La Tomba dei Sacerdoti Danzanti a Corneto," in *Die Welt der Etrusker, internationales Kolloquium 24.-26. Oktober 1988 in Berlin*, ed. H. Heres and M. Kunze. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1990. 307-314. Both of these publications maintain the ideas of his first article.

⁸⁰⁴ Dobrowolski, "Sisyphe et le Komos," 105. Dobrowolski mentions Camus: 102.

⁸⁰⁵ Several sources mention Sisyphos' cunning: Hom. *Il.* 6.153; Hes. fr. 10 Merkelbach-West; Alcaeus fr. 38 LP; Theogn. 1.701-12. Sisyphos' type of cunning is discussed in Marcel Detienne et Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Les ruses de l'intelligence: La mètis des Grecs*. Paris: Flammarion, 1974. 178.

⁸⁰⁶ Another possible explanation for the vase would be to argue that Sisyphos is a representation of the sin of *hubris*, and he is linked to the symposiasts in order to characterize them as guilty of *hubris* as well. This argument was made to me as a theoretical possibility by Clemente Marconi. I would argue against it that while Sisyphos is caricatured on the vase, the symposiasts themselves are not, and it seems unlikely that symposiasts would purchase a vase for use during a symposium if it were in effect a morality lesson against them.

At this point, it is helpful to turn to textual evidence. That *Sisyphos* was a reoccurring title in Greek comic theater supports the idea that Sisyphos could be a figure of fun, but since little to nothing survives of these works, we cannot know what specifically about Sisyphos' story or character inspired their humor.⁸⁰⁷ Much more helpful is a line from the first book of Plato's *Republic*, whose possible connection with these vases has not before been noticed. Here, near the beginning of the dialogue, the old man Cephalus, speaking to Socrates, gives an account of his ideas about justice.⁸⁰⁸ His thoughts are influenced by his age and consequent premonitions of death:

But you know, Socrates, that when someone thinks his end is near, he becomes frightened and concerned about things he didn't fear before. It's then that the stories (*muthoi*) we're told about Hades, about how people who've been unjust here must pay the penalty there – stories he used to make fun of (*katagelômenoi*) – twist his soul this way and that for fear they're true.⁸⁰⁹

⁸⁰⁷ Aeschylus, Euripides, and possibly Sophocles wrote plays named *Sisyphos*, some of which were probably satyr plays. Aeschylus, *Sisyphos drapetes* and/or *Sisyphos petrokylistes*: see S. Radt, *TrGF* vol. 3 (1985), pp. 337-41 (and fr. 225-34). On Sophocles' treatment, see *TGF* (Nauck 2nd ed.), pp. 74ff., 251, 572; *The Fragments of Sophocles*, ed. A. C. Pearson, vol. ii. pp. 184ff. Critias also wrote a comic play titled *Sisyphos*: quoted in Sext. Emp., ed. Bekker, 402; *TGF* (Nauck 2nd ed.) 771-2.

⁸⁰⁸ For discussions of Cephalus, though without specific notice of the phrase in question, see Peter J. Steinberger, "Who is Cephalus?" *Political Theory*, Vol. 24, No. 2. (May, 1996), pp. 172-199; John Evan Seery, "Politics as Ironic Community: On the Themes of Descent and Return in Plato's *Republic*," *Political Theory*, 16.2 (1988), pp. 229-256; Julia Annas, "Plato and Common Morality," *CQ*, 26.2 (1978), pp. 437-451; and Norman O. Dahl, "Plato's Defense of Justice," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 51.4 (1991), pp. 809-834. On Book One as a whole, see Kimon Lycos, *Plato on Justice and Power: Reading Book I of Plato's "Republic"*. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1987. Cephalus' statement is sometimes taken as evidence for a change in attitudes towards the afterlife in the 5th c. BCE: see H. Hoffmann, "From Charos to Charon: Some Notes on the Human Encounter with Death in Attic Red-Figured Vase-Painting," *Visible Religion* 4-5 (1985-1986), pp. 173-194. 183; Ch. Sourvinou-Inwood, "Reading" *Greek Death: To the End of the Classical Period*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995. 203 n. 379.

⁸⁰⁹ Plato, *Republic*, 330d.

This passage provides support for the idea that some Greeks made fun of stories of punishment in the afterlife, and also that this mockery was not apotropaic, but was rather a product of disbelief. We can now better understand the tone of other comments about Sisyphos, for example, Pausanias' interjection of "if anyone believes the story" during his narrative of Sisyphos' punishment.⁸¹⁰ Still, the purpose of making fun of punishments in general or Sisyphos in particular is not made clear from Cephalus' statement, and neither is the identity of the mockers, besides that they are young.

Another interlocutor in Book One of the *Republic* also discusses young men and their attitudes towards the Underworld. This is Adeimantus, who argues that the thought of the punishments that await in Hades will not prevent anyone from being unjust during their lives, because they will simply become initiated into one of the mystery religions that promises salvation from these punishments.⁸¹¹ Plato himself, like his character Adeimantus, seems to have disapproved of the moral consequences of escaping retribution after death, and even went so far as to invent his own eschatological myths to better fit his philosophical systems.⁸¹² Adeimantus thus undoubtedly gives a distorted

⁸¹⁰ "On the summit of the Acrocorinth is a temple of Aphrodite.... The spring, which is behind the temple, they say was the gift of Asopus to Sisyphus. The latter knew, so runs the legend, that Zeus had ravished Aegina, the daughter of Asopus, but refused to give information to the seeker before he had a spring given him on the Acrocorinth. When Asopus granted this request Sisyphus turned informer, and on this account he receives--if anyone believes the story--punishment in Hades." Pausanias, 2.5.1.

⁸¹¹ Graf, *Eleusis und die orphische Dichtung*, 79-126; Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 285-301.

⁸¹² On Plato's eschatology, see D.L. Blank, "The Fate of the Ignorant in Plato's *Gorgias*," *Hermes*, 119 (1991), 22-36; Ch. B. Daniels, "The Afterlife Myth in Plato's *Gorgias*," *Journal of Value Inquiry*, 26 (1992), 271-270; D. Kaatmann, "The Role of the Myth in Plato's *Gorgias*," *Dialogue*, 38 (1995), 15-20; K. Dorter, "The Myth of Afterlife (107c1-

version when he describes what the initiates believe about their fate in the Underworld, but this and Aristophanes' *Frogs* are our main sources on Orphic Underworld beliefs from the Classical period.⁸¹³ Adeimantus says that the proponents of the mystery religions

lead the just to Hades, seat them on couches, provide them with a symposium of pious people, crown them with wreaths, and make them spend all their time drinking – as if they thought drunkenness was the finest wage of virtue.⁸¹⁴

The unjust and the impious, that is, the non-initiates, they “bury in mud in Hades and force them to carry water in a sieve...”⁸¹⁵ This last clause is a reference to the mythological punishment of the Danaides, the fifty sisters who, at the command of their father, killed their husbands on their wedding-night; in Hades, they were assigned the task of filling a bath in which to wash away their sins, but forever fail, since they carry sieves or leaky containers.⁸¹⁶ The same opposition between those who enjoy themselves in the Underworld and those who must carry water appears in a fragment from the

Fluteloader of Philetairos:

Oh Zeus, it surely is a fine thing to die to the sound of flutes,
For only those people have authorization to make love in Hades,
While those with sordid characters, with no experience of the arts,

115a3),” in *Plato's Phaedo: An Introduction*; P.C. Santilli, “Socrates and Asclepius: The Final Works,” *International Studies in Philosophy*, 22 (1990), 29-39.

⁸¹³ For a discussion of the relation of Plato's description to probable Orphic beliefs, see Lars Albinus, *House of Hades: Studies in Ancient Greek Eschatology*. Aarhus (Denmark): Aarhus University Press, 2000. 134-135.

⁸¹⁴ Plato, *Republic*, 363c.

⁸¹⁵ Plato, *Republic*, 363d.

⁸¹⁶ Apollodorus, 2.1.5.

Carry (water) to the perforated jar.⁸¹⁷

Plato's, and Adeimantus', objection to beliefs about initiation is that someone might decide that he could escape punishments and gain a pleasant afterlife not by the onerous task of leading a good life, but rather by making sure to become initiated, then leading a pleasant and easy (and thus inevitably vicious) life on earth.⁸¹⁸ Adeimantus even presents a sample dialogue between an objectioner and a young man who believes in the mysteries:

‘But in Hades won't we pay the penalty for crimes committed here, either ourselves or our children's children?’

‘My friend,’ the young man will say as he does his calculation, ‘mystery rites have great power and the gods have great power of absolution.’⁸¹⁹

It is tempting to conclude that the young man who laughs at the punishments of Hades in Cephalus' speech is closely related to the young man who distains these punishments in the description of Adeimantus, and that the cause of both the distain and the laughter is a belief in the salvific powers of initiation, which will assure a pleasant afterlife consisting

⁸¹⁷ Philetairos, qtd. In Athenaeus 14.633e (=fr. 18 Kock).

⁸¹⁸ Adeimantus makes the connection between initiation and a vicious life in Plato, *Republic*, 363e-364a.

⁸¹⁹ Plato, *Republic*, 366a. Plutarch will also later make the same connection between initiation and the avoidance of scarcely believable punishments: “...Epicurus, by making the dissolution a scattering into emptiness and atoms, does still more to root out our hope of preservation, a hope for which (I had almost said) all men and all women are ready to match their teeth against the fangs of Cerberus and carry water to the leaky urn, if only they may still continue to be and not be blotted out. Yet such tales as these... are not feared by very many, being the doctrine and fabulous argument of mothers and nurses; and even those who fear them hold that there is an answering remedy in certain mystic ceremonies and rituals of purification, and that when cleansed by these they will pass their time in the other world in play and choral dancing in regions where there is radiance and a sweet breeze and a sound of voices.” Plutarch, *Moralia*, 1105A-B.

of something like a perpetual symposium. The *Republic* makes no explicit connection between initiates and those who laugh at stories of punishments, but in the *Gorgias*, initiation and this type of mockery are more closely linked. Here, Socrates, discussing the life of self-control, makes an analogy about the minds of self-indulgent fools by relating the story of “a clever story-teller (*tis muthologōn*), from Sicily perhaps, or Italy,” that is, probably a Pythagorean, since Sicily and the Greek colonies of Italy were centers of Pythagorean doctrine. This storyteller, Socrates says,

identified fools (*anoatoi*) with non-initiates (*amuatoi*) and said about the part of the mind where the desires are located that in fools (which is to say, when this part is in an unrestrained and uncapped state) it is a leaky jar – this is his analogy for its instability.... He produces evidence to suggest that there’s no one in Hades... worse off than these non-initiates, who go about trying to fill one leaky jar with water they bring to it in another equally leaky vessel, a sieve.⁸²⁰

The association of water-carriers with Orphic beliefs is clear from other texts, which detail their symbolism – they represent those who distained initiation during life.⁸²¹ In the

⁸²⁰ Plato, *Gorgias*, 493a-b.

⁸²¹ The connection between these water-carriers and initiation is discussed Eva Keuls, *The Water Carriers in Hades: A Study of Catharsis through Toil in Classical Antiquity*. Amsterdam: A. M. Hakkert, 1974; Graf, *Eleusis und die orphische Dichtung*, 107-19, 185-94; Albinus, *House of Hades*, 133-140. These discussions are based on Pausanias’ description of part of Polygnotos’ *Nekyia* fresco in the Lesche of the Knidians (c. 460 BC): “in the painting a jar, and an old man, with a boy and two women. One of these, who is young, is under the rock; the other is beside the old man and of a like age to his. The others are carrying water, but you will guess that the old woman's water-jar is broken. All that remains of the water in the sherd she is pouring out again into the jar. We inferred that these people too were of those who had held of no account the rites at Eleusis. For the Greeks of an earlier period looked upon the Eleusinian mysteries as being as much higher than all other religious acts as gods are higher than heroes.” Paus. 10.31.10-11. Albinus argues that the reference to Charon’s crossing of the river Acheron in Paus. 10.28.2, which is a feature of the Orphic work the *Minyad* (Paus., 10.28.2), makes it likely that Polygnotos was also working with Orphic sources for the water-carriers: Albinus, *House of Hades*, 133. The *Minyad* is likely to be Orphic because its author, Prodicus, according to Paus. 4.33.7, was also associated with the *Descent into*

Gorgias, Socrates' story-teller clearly takes an attitude not of pity but of mockery towards these water carriers. In his opinion, non-initiates are fools, and doubly so, both because they did not become initiated during life and because, after death, they are too foolish to notice that their efforts are wasted, for, unlike the mythical *Dainads*, whose punishment is assigned, these non-initiates seem to carry water voluntarily – to be punishing themselves fruitlessly, foolishly, and even amusingly.

Another text that connects initiation, laughter, and the symposium is the *Frogs*, whose initiates, declaring that they are preparing to feast, sing a hymn to *Iacchos* in which they tell him that “here with dancing, songs, and laughter – all the best of all the arts – we your worshippers await you...”⁸²² The chorus goes on to demonstrate the type of laughter they intend by making jokes about “distinguished bystanders”; they mock *Archedemus*, *Cleisthenes*, and *Callias* before *Dionysos* interrupts them to ask directions. Underworld punishments form the substance of later jokes in the *Frogs*, when *Aeacus*, angry about the treatment of *Kerberos*, threatens *Dionysos*, whom he mistakes for *Herakles*, that

I'll have you flung over the cliff, down to the black-hearted Stygian rocks,
and you'll be chased by the prowling hounds of Hell and the hundred-
headed viper will tear your guts out and the Tartessian lamprey shall
devour your lungs and the Tithrasian Gorgons can have your kidneys...⁸²³

Hades (Clem. Al. *Strom.* 2.21 = *Orph.Test.* 222), a poem traditionally ascribed to *Orpheus* and perhaps even identical with the *Minyad*: *Orph.Fr.* 293-96; Kern, *Orphicorum Fragmenta* 1922, 304-7; Wilamowitz, *Homerische Untersuchungen*, 1884, 223.

⁸²² Aristophanes, *Frogs*, 316-459.

⁸²³ Aristophanes, *Frogs*, 470-7.

Since the bulk of the humor here lies in the exaggeration of the punishments, it is difficult to know whether or not the idea of this type of punishment is also mocked *per se*.⁸²⁴

Still, from the Plato texts, it is clear that initiates could regard those punished in the Underworld with disdain, even making fun of them for getting what they deserved for missing their opportunities to become initiated. Before returning to Sisyphos' possible involvement in this type of mockery, another vase should be pointed out, since it also clearly seems to represent comically punished figures who have Orphic significance. This is a black-figure lekythos in Palermo.⁸²⁵ (fig. 8.5.5) It has Underworld scenes on both sides, one with solely winged spirits, the other with water carriers bringing amphorae to a large pithos, accompanied by an old man who is bending down, engaged in some work, with a kneeling donkey behind him. This man is surely Oknos, whose punishment in the Underworld was to plait a straw rope, which was continually eaten up by a donkey. Oknos, whose name means "delay," is featured in Orphic texts as a representation of those who hesitate to be initiated during life.⁸²⁶ Thus, like the water carriers, he

⁸²⁴ The joking in the *Frogs* about Dionysos' fear of the Empusa also likely springs from ideas of the unreality of old wives' (or Herakles') stories, which some ancient authors seemed to think encompassed Sisyphos - though in this case Aristophanes' humor comes from his making the monsters real. Aristophanes, *Frogs*, 287-300. Lucian, *Vera historia* also features a comic description of a visit to the Isle of the Blessed (2.5-29) and the realm of punishment of sinners (2.30-31), though Sisyphos is not mentioned. Lucian, like Aristophanes, connects laughter to the happy afterlife, though in this case the laughter could be read mostly as a feature of an ideal symposium: "But the greatest inducement to happiness [the blessed dead] have is the two springs near their table, that of Laughter and that of Pleasure. At the beginning of the banquet they all drink from both of these, and thereafter spend their hours laughing and enjoying themselves." Lucian, *Vera historia* 2.16.

⁸²⁵ Palermo, Mus. Arch. Regionale, 2141.

⁸²⁶ Graf, *Eleusis und die orphische Dichtung*, 107-19, 185-94.

represents the fate of non-initiates. The comic style in which he and the other figures of the vase are represented is clear from a comparison with a non-grotesque representation of the water-carriers theme, on an amphora in Munich,⁸²⁷ (fig. 8.5.7) and to a definitely comic pelike in Berlin showing mortal water-carriers and an old man.⁸²⁸ (fig 8.5.8) On the Munich amphora, the water-carriers are winged, showing that they are spirits, and are neatly and decoratively arranged around the pithos, calmly waiting their turn to deposit the contents of their amphorae. By contrast, the water-carriers on the Palermo lekythos are in a variety of positions; they undignifiedly bend to pick up their amphorae or run, with frantically pumping knees, towards the pithos. Despite their seeming attention to their work, one, in the lower right-hand corner, takes the time to pull the tail of Oknos' donkey. Comparing this scene to the Berlin pelike, it is clear that Attic painters of the period exploited skinny, angular bodies and prancing legs for comic effect (the humorous intent of the pelike is certain not only from the figures connected with the water pump but also from the incongruous juxtaposition of these everyday activities with the masturbating satyr and prone female – perhaps the scene is meant as a parody of Amphitrite at the spring). This humorous representation of the water-carriers and Oknos on the Palermo lekythos perfectly accords with the mocking attitude shown towards the water-carriers and, by extension, towards other symbols of non-initiation demonstrated in the *Gorgias* and hinted at in the other texts discussed.

What of Sisyphos, then? He might himself have been used in Orphic symbolism, both because he appears with the water-carriers on the Munich amphora and because he

⁸²⁷ Munich, Antikensammlungen, 1493.

⁸²⁸ Berlin, Antikensammlung, 3228.

is described by Pausanias as placed near to the water-carriers in Polygnotos' *Nekyia* fresco.⁸²⁹ Even if Sisyphos was not an Orphic symbol, it is certainly possible that the general idea of a mocking attitude towards those punished in the Underworld could extend to him, since he was the most common punished figure on vase-painting.⁸³⁰ The means of this mockery – to take him out of Hades by placing him in the symposium – is explicable within an Orphic context as well. He, along with other non-initiates, would be punished in the Underworld while the initiates enjoyed a perpetual banquet; thus, to place him within the context of a symposium is not merely incongruous, but a true comic opposite of his real situation.

Thus it seems that some symposiasts were also initiates, and enjoyed thoughts of an eternity of symposia through mocking those who had missed their opportunities. Fear and ridicule are closely related here - the potential initiate feared the punishments of the afterworld, and underwent initiation to escape them. Serious images of these punishments operate as reminders of what has been escaped and of the power of imitation. Comic

⁸²⁹ Pausanias describes “the form of a cliff, and Sisyphus, the son of Aeolus, is trying his hardest to push the rock up it. There is also in the painting a jar, and an old man, with a boy and two women. One of these, who is young, is under the rock; the other is beside the old man and of a like age to his. The others are carrying water, but you will guess that the old woman's water-jar is broken. All that remains of the water in the sherd she is pouring out again into the jar. We inferred that these people too were of those who had held of no account the rites at Eleusis. For the Greeks of an earlier period looked upon the Eleusinian mysteries as being as much higher than all other religious acts as gods are higher than heroes.” Pausanias, 10.31.10-11.

⁸³⁰ Diodorus, at least, closely associated Orphism and the general idea of Underworld punishment, since he claims that Orpheus brought back from Egypt his “fabulous account (*muthopoian*)” of his journey to Hades and moreover introduced stories of the punishments there as well as the meadows awaiting the pious. Diod. 1.96.4-5.

images serve the same purpose, for the symposiast parodying Sisypheos was gleefully triumphing over all the fearful myths that Sisypheos suffered and represented.

VI. Holi

The Hindu festival of *Holi* is a multi-day festival, still observed in India and Indian immigrant communities (though abroad its form is simplified).⁸³¹ On the evening of the first day, a bonfire is lit and men and women circumambulate it, making offerings of cow dung. The fire is also vituperated with a type of speech called *kharab bhasha*, literally “bad talk,” which is “genuinely obscene and would be entirely out of order in any other context.”⁸³² The next day is devoted to general merry- and mischief-making, with celebrants throwing colored (or dirty) water and dust on one another; obscene joking can also accompany this.⁸³³ Men and women band together to mock one another; in one ritual, land-owning men endure blows with canes from the wives of their low-caste laborers while making jokes such as “Do you want some seed from me?”⁸³⁴ There can

⁸³¹ The classic description is McKim Marriott, “The Feast of Love” in *Krishna: Myths, Rites, and Attitudes*, ed. Milton Singer. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1966. pp. 200-212; also useful is Lawrence A. Babb, *The Divine Hierarchy: Popular Hinduism in Central India*. New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1975.

⁸³² Lawrence A. Babb, *The Divine Hierarchy: Popular Hinduism in Central India*. New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1975. 169.

⁸³³ In Central India, the Mahrattas “cast the ashes [from the bonfire] upon one another, and throw them in the air, repeating their favorite extemporary stanzas, full of the grossest indelicacy, into which they freely introduce the names of their superiors, coupled with the most abominable allusions.” Thomas Duer Broughton, *Letters Written in a Mahratta Camp During the Year 1809*. 2nd ed. London: Constable, 1892. 69, 71, quoted in W. Crooke, “The Holi: A Vernal Festival of the Hindus,” *Folklore*, 25.1 (1914), pp. 55-83. 63-64.

⁸³⁴ McKim Marriott, “The Feast of Love” in *Krishna: Myths, Rites, and Attitudes*, ed. Milton Singer. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1966. pp. 200-212. 211. Similar attacks of men on women are collected by Crooke: “At the other Jat villages

be suggestive dance performances: Marriott saw a male dancer pantomiming intercourse and masturbation.⁸³⁵ Phallic themes were prevalent in the *Holi* festival Babb observed in Raipur in 1967: a life-sized image of a man dressed like a raja appeared in the bazaar, featuring with an enormous phallus hinged so that it could be waved about by someone

in the northern part of the Mathura district, Jan and Bathen, a peculiar game is played about the time of the *Holi*. The men arm themselves with branches of trees and form a ring, while the women with stout *lathis* or staves, and with saris [sheets] drawn over their faces, fiercely assault the ring and break it, soundly belabouring the men. Separate rings are formed by the Jats and by the Chamars [curriers] or low castes. Finally they return to the village in pairs, the man chanting a song, and the woman, when he has finished, driving him on a few paces." G. R. Hearn, "Passing Through the Fire at Phalen," *Man*, 5 (1905), pp. 154-155. 155, quoted in W. Crooke, "The Holi: A Vernal Festival of the Hindus," *Folklore*, 25.1 (1914), pp. 55-83. 70. The Gonds and other forest tribes of the Central Provinces perform a ceremony of "the breaking of the sugar ball" around the time of *Holi*: "a stout pole, some twelve or fifteen feet high, is set up, and a lump of *gur* [coarse sugar from which the treacle has not been removed], with a rupee in it, placed on the top, and round it the Gond women ... take their stand, each with a little green tamarind rod in her hands. The men collect outside, and each has a kind of shield, made of two parallel sticks joined by a cross-piece held in the hand, to protect themselves from the blows. They make a rush together, and one of them swarms up the pole, the women all the time plying their tamarind rods vigorously; and it is no child's play, as the men's backs attest the next day. When he gets to the top he takes the piece of *gur* and slips down, and gets off as rapidly as he can. This is done five or six times over, with the greatest good humour, and generally ends with an attack of the women an *masse* on all the men. It is a regular Saturnalia for the women, who lose all fear and respect even for a Settlement Officer; and on one occasion when he was looking on, he only escaped by the most abject submission, and presentation of rupees." C. A. Elliott, *Hoshungabad Settlement Report* (1867), pp. 126-127, quoted in W. Crooke, "The Holi: A Vernal Festival of the Hindus," *Folklore*, 25.1 (1914), pp. 55-83. 70-71. Similar is a *Holi* ritual of the Bhils of Western India: "another of their frolics is to plant a small tree branch firmly in the ground. Round this men and women gather, the women round the tree, the men outside. One man rushing in tries to uproot the tree, when all the women set on him and thrash him so soundly that he has to retire. Another man steps in, and he too is belaboured, and makes his escape. Thus the play goes on, till one man luckier or thicker skinned than the rest, bears off the tree, but seldom without a load of blows that cripples him for days." *Bombay Gazetteer*, vi (1880), p. 21, quoted in W. Crooke, "The Holi: A Vernal Festival of the Hindus," *Folklore*, 25.1 (1914), pp. 55-83. 71.

⁸³⁵ McKim Marriott, "The Feast of Love" in *Krishna: Myths, Rites, and Attitudes*, ed. Milton Singer. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1966. pp. 200-212. 204.

behind the statue; mimeographed sheets with obscene poetry and prose were circulated (one of which, in the form of a public proclamation, declared that a lady had stolen the statue's "matchless penis," to the dismay of the other ladies); while young men carved obscene words, usually *land*, "penis," in reverse on potatoes and printed the results with dye on the clothes of unsuspecting male victims.⁸³⁶ Babb also reports that some men display wooden images of phalloi, sometimes bowing to these in acts of faux-worship, and that songs sung during the festival have obscene and often phallic themes, while a favorite festal rallying cry is *maharaj land ki jai* – "victory to the lord penis."⁸³⁷ The day is reportedly one of sexual license - Marriott notes that after the village celebration he observed, several women were prosecuted for adultery.⁸³⁸ Thus, *Holi* is an occasion for reversals - aggressive acts by women, open displays of sexuality, even the wearing of feminine dress by men – and of other types of pollutions – vegetarians can eat meat during *Holi*, for instance.⁸³⁹ After the festival is over, people take baths and break or

⁸³⁶ Lawrence A. Babb, *The Divine Hierarchy: Popular Hinduism in Central India*. New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1975. 170-171.

⁸³⁷ Lawrence A. Babb, *The Divine Hierarchy: Popular Hinduism in Central India*. New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1975. 171.

⁸³⁸ McKim Marriott, "The Feast of Love" in *Krishna: Myths, Rites, and Attitudes*, ed. Milton Singer. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1966. pp. 200-212. 204. W. Crooke, "The Holi: A Vernal Festival of the Hindus," *Folklore*, 25.1 (1914), pp. 55-83. 68 also reports the "usual outburst of obscenity and sexual licence."

⁸³⁹ Lawrence A. Babb, *The Divine Hierarchy: Popular Hinduism in Central India*. New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1975. 172.

throw away their old clay pots.⁸⁴⁰ Informants report that the festival is one of catharsis – that “the accumulated evils of the past year are swept away.”⁸⁴¹

“Bad talk,” mock-combats of men and women, phallic imagery and actions – all these would seem to make *Holi* a ritual comparable to those of Greece. Indeed, the early scholar Crooke did try to interpret *Holi* as a festival mourning the death and resurrection of death of a vegetation deity similar to the Demeter myth.⁸⁴² It was clear to Crooke that the *Holi* rituals have no true connection to the Hindu religion, and this has been confirmed by later scholars, who posit that the rituals were probably integrated into Hinduism only in the 17th century.⁸⁴³ The ill-fit is today most obvious from the different versions of the myths told to account for the rituals; the story is usually about the death of some female demon (by being mocked by children and then burned; by being burned on a pyre she had, thinking herself fireproof, designated for the death of some virtuous hero; upon being foiled by some god; etc.).⁸⁴⁴ The identity of the demon changes; more

⁸⁴⁰ Lawrence A. Babb, *The Divine Hierarchy: Popular Hinduism in Central India*. New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1975. 173.

⁸⁴¹ Lawrence A. Babb, *The Divine Hierarchy: Popular Hinduism in Central India*. New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1975. 170.

⁸⁴² W. Crooke, “The Holi: A Vernal Festival of the Hindus,” *Folklore*, 25.1 (1914), pp. 55-83. 76. Fittingly for his disapproval of the obscene features of *Holi*, Crooke thought that “the orgiastic ritual of the present day [disguise] the primitive form of the observance.” 76.

⁸⁴³ W. Crooke, “The Holi: A Vernal Festival of the Hindus,” *Folklore*, 25.1 (1914), pp. 55-83. 77, and McKim Marriott, “The Feast of Love” in *Krishna: Myths, Rites, and Attitudes*, ed. Milton Singer. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1966. pp. 200-212. 208.

⁸⁴⁴ For the different versions, see W. Crooke, “The Holi: A Vernal Festival of the Hindus,” *Folklore*, 25.1 (1914), pp. 55-83. 76-78; Lawrence A. Babb, *The Divine Hierarchy: Popular Hinduism in Central India*. New York and London: Columbia

importantly, so does that of the god who conquers – he can be Siva, Vishnu, Rama, or Krishna. Such switches clearly show attempts to fit the festival into the worship of whichever deity became prevalent in the area. Detached from its original religious background, the *Holi* ritual, no matter how many similarities it might show to *aischrologia*, cannot be fully interpreted. Interpreted religiously, that is, since its social function can be theorized about (just as the social functions of American Halloween can be seen even though its participants do not celebrate this holiday for its original purpose). Scholars on *Holi* agree that the its temporary reversals of all the rules of social life operate to reinforce these rules when order is restored, and ultimately that it is in service of the caste structure, in which people are fundamentally unequal, by being a ritual of temporary equality.⁸⁴⁵

A consideration of humor in other Eastern religions is also outside of our scope, especially since it seems that humor there appears not in the form of comparable public rituals, but mostly in aphorisms designed for teaching purposes.⁸⁴⁶ And, of course, there

University Press, 1975. 169. McKim Marriott, “The Feast of Love” in *Krishna: Myths, Rites, and Attitudes*, ed. Milton Singer. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1966. pp. 200-212. 200.

⁸⁴⁵ “Each riotous act at Holi implies some opposite, positive rule or fact of everyday social organization in the village”: McKim Marriott, “The Feast of Love” in *Krishna: Myths, Rites, and Attitudes*, ed. Milton Singer. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1966. pp. 200-212. 210. Caste structure: Louis Albert Hieb, *The Hopi Ritual Clown: Life as it Should Not Be*. (PhD 1972, Princeton University). 167.

⁸⁴⁶ For a discussion of laughter in eastern religions, see Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, *Laughing Gods, Weeping Virgins: Laughter in the History of Religion*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997. pp. 122-134; also, John Morreall, “The Rejection of Humor in Western Thought,” *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 39.3 (1989), pp. 243-265. Morreall explains the use of humor in Buddhist teaching: “Interchanges between students and masters, for example, often involve illogical changes of thought, as when Tozan (Tung-shan) was asked, ‘What is the Buddha?’ and answered, ‘Three pounds of flax.’”

are many other cultures from which simply too little evidence about humor survives to be useful.⁸⁴⁷

VII. Modern Laughter

It is especially important to realize that comparisons with the multiform varieties of modern Western laughter will not help our understanding of *aischrologia*. The European Fool, once he moves out of the Church and its feasts, is a secular figure without the religious function of the fools of some other cultures.⁸⁴⁸ The great majority of humor since the Reformation is also not comparable to ancient ritual laughter, since modern

Contradictions are used in the same way, to frustrate the rational mind, and thus call attention to it. And answers to a student's question need not have any meaning at all, as in Rinzai's indiscriminately replying to questions with the syllable 'Kwatz!' or the common practice of responding by striking students with sticks, slapping them, and twisting their noses. The purpose of all of this nonsense and slapstick is to derail the rational mind, so that the student sees at a more basic level of awareness the illusion of the individual substantial self and the true nature of reality." 261. Some of Diogenes' rhetorical flourishes could be compared to these Buddhist antics, such as his famous presentation of a plucked chicken as a refutation of Plato's definition of man as a "featherless biped." *D.L.* 6.40. For a discussion, with other examples, see R. Bracht Branham, *Unruly Eloquence: Lucian and the Comedy of Traditions*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989. 53.

⁸⁴⁷ The cultures of the Ancient Near East, for example; though see the efforts of Benjamin R. Foster, "Humour and Cuneiform Literature," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 6 (1974), pp. 69-85, and also "Humor and Wit in the Ancient Near East," in Jack M. Sasson, ed., *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000. Vol. 4, pp. 2459-2469. Some of the examples of humor discussed by Foster have intriguing hints of religious contexts, but hints they must remain unless new discoveries add to our knowledge.

⁸⁴⁸ On Fool in Europe, see Enid Welsford, *The Fool: His Social and Literary History*. London: Faber and Faber, 1935, and Sandra Billington, *A Social History of the Fool*. Brighton: Harvester Press, 1984.

humor is either “just for fun,” unrelated to any religious ritual,⁸⁴⁹ or, if it has a purpose, is used for mocking unacceptable behavior, as do, for example, modern political cartoons.⁸⁵⁰ There is a late 20th century attempt to integrate humor into evangelical Christianity, or even to interpret Jesus as a type of clown figure who turned the world topsy-turvy with his message and brings joy to the heart of his followers, but this is an

⁸⁴⁹ Although occasions of secular laughter can still be fenced about with as many rules and ritualistic behaviors as religious laughter had been, and can be just as revealing of social structure. For example, R.L. Coser, “Laughter among Colleagues: A Study of the Social Functions of Humor among the Staff of a Mental Hospital,” *Psychiatry* 23.1 (1960), pp. 81-95 has written about the way in which humor and joking express, define, and create social bonds (in this case, particularly between senior and junior staff members). Don Handelman and Bruce Kapferer, “Forms of Joking Activity: A Comparative Approach,” *American Anthropologist*, 74.3 (1972), pp. 484-517, provides a more general discussion of the complications of the “joking frame” and rules of acceptable joking occasions and encounters even in non-ritual environments. For a rich discussion of “freaks” in the modern world comparable in appearance, though not in function, to those of Greek culture, see Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993.

⁸⁵⁰ A good collection of scholarship on modern cartoons and caricatures can be found in Georg Piltz, *Geschichte der europäischen Karikatur*. Berlin: VEB, 1976. Similar humorous criticism can also be leveled against religion, but this is also unlike *aischrologia*, since such criticisms are either leveled by one sect against another – there was much humorous disparagement of this sort during the Reformation – or by the unreligious against the religious, for perceived lapses from the morality they describe: for this, see Ian Russell, “‘My Dear, Dear Friends’: The Parodic Sermon in Oral Tradition,” in *Spoken in Jest*, ed. Gillian Bennett. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991. pp. 237-256.

For similar operations of morality and humor in early modern culture, see the discussion of humorous prints as a vehicle for dissemination of standards of morality, in Christa Grössinger, *Humour and Folly in Secular and Profane Prints of Northern Europe, 1430-1540*. London: Harvey Miller, 2002. pp. 55-88. Another example of secular ritualized humor in the service of morality is the *charivari*; see Natalie Zemon Davis, “The Reasons of Misrule: Youth Groups and Charivaris in Sixteenth-Century France,” *Past and Present*, 50 (1971), pp. 41-75. Reprinted as “The Reasons of Misrule” in her *Society and Culture in Early Modern France: Eight Essays*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975, pp. 97-123.

argument of theologians and is too influenced by modern psychological theories to be comparable to antiquity.⁸⁵¹

⁸⁵¹ This modern “remythologization of laughter” has been discussed by Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, *Laughing Gods, Weeping Virgins: Laughter in the History of Religion*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997. pp. 102-121. Gilhus connects the trend to modern ‘televangelical’ idea that religion should be entertaining (102), and traces it all the way to modern charismatic movements, some of which produce uncontrollable laughter in their followers (pp. 119-121). Examples of modern Christian theological writings on humor are Harvey Cox, *Feast of Fools: A Theological Essay on Festivity and Fantasy*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1969; Conrad Hyers, *The Comic Vision and the Christian Faith: A Celebration of Life and Laughter*. New York: Pilgrim Press, 1981; Karl-Josef Kuschel, *Laughter: A Theological Essay*, trans. John Bowden. New York: Continuum, 1994; Kathleen M. Sands, “Ifs, Ands, and Butts: Theological Reflections on Humor,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 64.3 (1996), pp. 499-523; Patrick Laude, *Divine Play, Sacred Laughter, and Spiritual Understanding*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

Appendix 6: The Anthropology of Ritual Laughter

The History of Scholarship on Ritual Laughter

Various rituals involving laughter and obscenity have been recorded by various European travelers to Africa, from the first missionaries and colonials to the latest anthropologists. The earliest regarded these speeches and songs as obscene in a non-neutral sense, and often describe them with disgust, recording little specific detail – one author even translates the obscene speeches of an African tribe into Latin.⁸⁵² This attitude changed, especially because of Frazer's attempts in *The Golden Bough* to explain some of the odder rituals of Western antiquity by comparison with historical “primitive” societies; however, it was not until Evans-Pritchard wrote his 1929 article “Some Collective Expressions of Obscenity in Africa” that the phenomenon began to be regarded as of genuine anthropological interest.

Evans-Pritchard summarized the evidence for ritual obscenity then available from memoirs and anthropological reports as well as adding his own observations on the A-Zande. He theorized that ritual obscenity occurred on two types of occasions: one, the “magico-religious ceremonies,” which have a certain object or goal (initiation, funeral ceremonies, rain ceremonies, ceremonies to rid crops from pests, sowing dances);⁸⁵³ the

⁸⁵² This was the Ba-Thonga as described by Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe*, as is pointed out by Evans-Pritchard, “Some Collective Expressions of Obscenity in Africa.” 314. Evans-Pritchard himself Latinized some words, and I have replaced his uses of, for example, “kino” or “female pudenda” with “vulva” and so on.

⁸⁵³ His complete list: initiation ceremonies (among the Ba-Ila, Ba-Thonga, A-Kamba, Lango, and Didinga tribes); funeral ceremonies (Ba-Ila, Ba-Thonga); feasts in honor of the Spirits (Ba-Ila); rain ceremonies (Ba-Thonga, A-Kamba, Lango); a ceremony for the protection of the crops from pests (Ba-Thonga); when stealing from one's mother's

second group consists of occasions of “arduous, lengthy and joint labour” (sowing, smelting, fishing, threshing, grinding).⁸⁵⁴ These African rituals comparable to *aischrologia* are summarized below, with additional evidence from other cultures. It should be noted that the historical period of the performance of these rituals varies – in Africa, with the progress of westernization across the continent.

I. *Initiation and Marriage*

I.1 Initiations of the Ba-Thonga of the Transvaal.

While there is a rigorous prohibition of actual sexual acts for those participating in the Ba-Thonga circumcision ritual, there is at the same time the use of obscene language is encouraged. For example, the mothers of the boys have to carry food to them, but remain out of their sight; thus, they deposit their burdens and call out to the adult men in charge of the initiates “We are burning.” This is a conventional metaphor, meaning that their heads are sore from having carried the pots such a long way. The men reply with obscene jokes such as “We know what is burning with you.”⁸⁵⁵ Among the northern clans of the

brother (A-Zande); for secret societies (A-Zande, Wapare, etc.); ceremonies on the birth of twins (Lango, Ingassana); marriage and illness of Children (Ingassana); a ceremony to protect the crops (Didinga); sowing dance (Lugbwara). Evans-Pritchard, “Some Collective Expressions of Obscenity in Africa.” 322.

⁸⁵⁴ His complete list: sowing, smelting, fishing, launching canoes (Ba-Ila) ; pounding mealies, carrying roofs of huts, smearing floors of huts ,(Ba-Thonga) ; threshing, grinding, carrying stones in government labor (A-Zande) ; building cairns (Did inga) ; cutting and carrying grass (Didinga). Evans-Pritchard, “Some Collective Expressions of Obscenity in Africa.” 322-323.

⁸⁵⁵ Evans-Pritchard, “Some Collective Expressions of Obscenity in Africa.” 314, summarizing the observations of the Ba-Thonga of Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe*.

Ba-Thonga, obscenities also feature in female initiations: during a month of seclusion, the girls are bathed every morning while initiated girls and women sing obscene songs; such songs are also sung to them in their seclusion hut.⁸⁵⁶

I.2 Puberty Rites of the Nkanga.

Turner observed similar initiation obscenity during the puberty rites of the Nkanga (a nomadic tribe in north-central Africa), who initiate girls immediately before their marriage. As during the Thesmophoria, there is here a connection of female-only groups, obscene speeches and songs, and fertility; as well, there are praises of adultery similar to those of the Haloa. During what Turner identifies as the seventh episode in the initiation, the young girl is wrapped in a blanket and laid on the ground in a fetal position, forbidden to move – she is regarded as someone “dying” and is spoken of as being “closed-up.”⁸⁵⁷ Her female relatives, with the exception of her mother, and later all the women of the surrounding area who care to join, dance together around the girl in the morning, singing loudly. During this period, men are not permitted to join the women (except for transvestites and crippled or blind men); the men gather elsewhere in the village, drinking beer and making critical comments about women.⁸⁵⁸ Many of the women’s songs mock marriage and praise adultery, e.g.

I have come with you to sing to you,
Give me a letter [i.e. a receipt for divorce],

⁸⁵⁶ Evans-Pritchard, “Some Collective Expressions of Obscenity in Africa.” 314-315.

⁸⁵⁷ Victor Turner, *The Drums of Affliction*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968. 213.

⁸⁵⁸ Turner, *The Drums of Affliction*. 216-217.

One letter [divorce papers], [for] one is fed up [with marriage].⁸⁵⁹

Another is:

O mother! Putting him in! [i.e., she is ready for adultery, an informant explained]
The girl is making a mistake at the beads [refers to the string of beads worn by
women round the waist; i.e. she is committing adultery]
O the stick for beating the *Chikinta* drum [i.e. the penis].⁸⁶⁰

Two shorter songs are “Leave marriage to stay by yourself,” which was explained as praise of a life of prostitution;⁸⁶¹ and “You did [something] when you played with my vulva, here is the *mutong’a* basket, fill it up” – explained by informants as meaning “You said you would beget children when you married me. I do my best. Here is the basket, fill it with children.” The women wave the baskets at the men as they sing this.⁸⁶² Other songs censure or mock local authorities: Turner reports one of the song-leaders acting the role of lover of one of the local chief’s wives while the chorus sang scandalous songs about her.⁸⁶³ At noon, the initiate is turned from her left to her right side, and men join the dances. New songs stress fertility rather than adultery, and are less critical of men.⁸⁶⁴ At some performances, a woman plays a drum with a reed passing through its membrane which produces a grunting sound, “said to represent that of a couple during intercourse.”⁸⁶⁵

⁸⁵⁹ Turner, *The Drums of Affliction*. 217.

⁸⁶⁰ Turner, *The Drums of Affliction*. 217.

⁸⁶¹ Turner, *The Drums of Affliction*. 218.

⁸⁶² Turner, *The Drums of Affliction*. 218.

⁸⁶³ Turner, *The Drums of Affliction*. 219.

⁸⁶⁴ Turner, *The Drums of Affliction*. 220-221.

I.3 Initiation Ceremonies of the Wiko.

Obscene dances with the exposure of genitalia are a part of the initiation ceremonies of the Wiko.⁸⁶⁵ According to the observations of Gluckman, on the night before the circumcisions there is a dance of both women and men in a mixed circle. Several men dress as women and pantomime copulation with the drums. As well, “[b]oth sexes kicked

⁸⁶⁵ Turner, *The Drums of Affliction*. 221. Similar ritual obscenity, though without the explicit connections to fertility that make the previous rituals interesting for a comparison with *aischrologia*, occur among the A-Kamba of Kenya. Here, boys and girls undergo initiation in part together, and converse and sing together obscenely. Gerhard Lindblom, *The Akamba in British East Africa: An Ethnological Monograph*. Uppsala: Appelbergs, 1920, gives an example of a song sung alternately by boys and girls:

Boys:

“*Rae, hae*, listen!

The vulva is a fool;

She dwells in the clothes.

Rae, hae!”

Girls:

“You say, ‘*Eeh*, listen!’

The penis is a fool.

It dwells among the testes,

And is a fool

To allow the vulva to drink fat.”

The A-Kamba apparently believe that the man will lose weight from much sexual intercourse, while the woman will grow fat. Quoted in Evans-Pritchard, “Some Collective Expressions of Obscenity in Africa.” 317.

The girls seem rather to get the best of the exchange; perhaps this could be an indication of the types of songs sung by the mocking choruses of men and women for the cult of Demeter Mysia (Pausanias 7.29.9-10).

⁸⁶⁶ Max Gluckman, “The Role of the Sexes in Wiko Circumcision Ceremonies,” in Meyer Fortes, ed., *Social structure: Studies Presented to A. R. Radcliffe-Brown*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949. pp. 145-167.

up their skirts to expose themselves.... Women imitated penes [sic] with their arms and men shaped vulvae with their hands.”⁸⁶⁷

I.4. Female Initiation Ceremonies of the Ba-Ila

The women of the Ba-Ila of Northern Rhodesia engage in ritual obscenity during the initiation of young girl, during which “grossly obscene” songs and dances are performed according to Smith and Dale; they do not further describe the lyrics, other than writing that during initiation these songs “have apparent motive is to excite the passions to the highest pitch.”⁸⁶⁸

I.5 Marriage Ceremonies of the People of the Fung Province of the Sudan

The people of the Fung Province of the Sudan have a special group of ceremonial clowns who dance and sing at ceremonies of marriage as well as for the birth of twins and when children are ill. Their performance is accompanied by play with wooden phalli.⁸⁶⁹

I.6 Dahomean Women’s Cult Ceremony

Similarly, during initiation into the *Mawu*, a Dahomean women’s cult, the priestess performs a dance while holding a wooden phallus, pantomiming with it sexual intercourse and masturbation.⁸⁷⁰

⁸⁶⁷ Max Gluckman, “The Role of the Sexes in Wiko Circumcision Ceremonies,” in Meyer Fortes, ed., *Social structure: Studies Presented to A. R. Radcliffe-Brown*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949. pp. 145-167. 153.

⁸⁶⁸ Quoted in Evans-Pritchard, “Some Collective Expressions of Obscenity in Africa.” 313.

⁸⁶⁹ Evans-Pritchard, “Some Collective Expressions of Obscenity in Africa.” 322.

I.7 Pakistani Wedding Ceremonies

Werbner provides a detailed study of the role of obscene joking in Pakistani wedding ceremonies.⁸⁷¹ During rituals in the women's quarters in the days preceding the marriage, during the preparation of the bride, a girl or young woman dressed as an old man instigates sexual joking, bawdy pranks and erotic dancing among the bride's attendants. This is especially true of the *Mhendi* rite, when the bride's body is decorated with henna. When the decoration begins, the older women sing songs of lamentation and the bride weeps, but as the ritual progresses, the younger women and girls take over and sing love songs, dance erotic dances, make sexual jokes and give obscene gifts.⁸⁷² (The similarity to the modern Western "bridal shower" is obvious.⁸⁷³) This goes on until the early hours of the morning, when the transvestite clown enters. "He" commonly plays with the bride's mother; in one wedding Werbner observed, the clown attacked the mother of the bride with the walking stick he carried and tried to embrace her, with the following dialogue resulting between the two:

"Give me one of your daughters."

⁸⁷⁰ M.J. Herskovits, *Dahomey*. New York: J. J. Augustin, 1938. 125-26.

⁸⁷¹ Pnina Werbner, "The Virgin and the Clown: Ritual Elaboration in Pakistani Migrants' Weddings," *Man*, 21.2 (1986), pp. 227-250.

⁸⁷² Pnina Werbner, "The Virgin and the Clown: Ritual Elaboration in Pakistani Migrants' Weddings," *Man*, 21.2 (1986), pp. 227-250. 234. Bawdy gifts: "In one wedding they consisted of a baby doll, a bra and a pair of panties bearing the words 'Screw Hole' in English."

⁸⁷³ For an example of similar happenings in Western culture, see the description of the 'bride's ritual' among the female workers in the hosiery industry in Britain: Sallie Westwood, *All Day Every Day: Factory and Family in the Making of Women's Lives*. London: Pluto Press, 1984. 111-28.

“You can take me.”
“You're too old.”
“Look at you, you're old too.”⁸⁷⁴

We will return to this combination of preparation for sexual life with the sexual joking of those who are “too old.”

I.8 Other Initiation Ceremonies Featuring Obscenity

There are other cultures with requirements for boys and men to speak or sing lewdly or perform obscene dances during initiations, e.g., the Basuto.⁸⁷⁵ The same is true of female initiations, e.g., the Becwana⁸⁷⁶ and again the Basuto.⁸⁷⁷

II. *Agricultural Ceremonies*

II.1 Various Agricultural Rituals of the Ba-Ila.

Among the Ba-Ila of Northern Rhodesia, “lewd songs” are sung during sowing, fishing, the launching of a new canoe, smelting, initiation, and funerals.⁸⁷⁸ Few of the songs of the smelters are recorded, but at least one of these has interesting connections to fertility:

You who curse the smelters!

⁸⁷⁴ Pnina Werbner, “The Virgin and the Clown: Ritual Elaboration in Pakistani Migrants' Weddings,” *Man*, 21.2 (1986), pp. 227-250. 240: “This type of dialogue is apparently common.”

⁸⁷⁵ Hugh Ashton, *The Basuto*. London: Oxford University Press, 1955. 28.

⁸⁷⁶ J. Tony Brown, “Circumcision Rites of the Becwana Tribes,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, LI (1921), pp. 419-27. 426-27.

⁸⁷⁷ Hugh Ashton, *The Basuto*. London: Oxford University Press, 1955. 57.

⁸⁷⁸ Evans-Pritchard, “Some Collective Expressions of Obscenity in Africa.” 312, citing Edwin W. Smith and A. M. Dale, *The Ila-speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia, Vol. 1*. London: Macmillan, 1920.

Your clitoris is grown tremendously,
Your labia will be hoes with which you can cultivate your grain.⁸⁷⁹

Fishing and smelting are all male activities, while the rest have both male and female participants.⁸⁸⁰

II.2 Agricultural Rituals of Zulu Women

Zulu women also engaged in obscene behavior during rituals in honor of *Nomkubulwana*, a goddess who was supposed to move in the mists which mark the end of the dry season and the beginning of the rains, and also to make her appearance in the spring with the coming of vegetation.⁸⁸¹ She taught humans how to make beer, to plant, to harvest, and, if offended, will blight the grain. To propitiate her, girls put on men's garments and then herded and milked the cattle, tasks normally taboo for them. Their mothers planted a garden for the goddess far out in the veld and poured a libation of beer, subsequently neglecting the garden.⁸⁸² At various times during these ceremonies, both women and girls

⁸⁷⁹ For the songs of the smelters, see Edwin W. Smith and A. M. Dale, *The Ila-speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia*, London: Macmillan, 1920. 208-209.

⁸⁸⁰ Evans-Pritchard, "Some Collective Expressions of Obscenity in Africa." 312.

⁸⁸¹ Max Gluckman, *Rituals of Rebellion in South-East Africa*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1952. 4-6. Both Gluckman and Bryant draw the obvious parallel between such a goddess and the Greek Demeter: Rev A. Bryant, *The Zulu People: As They were Before the White Man Came*. Pietermaritzburg: Shuter and Shooter, 1949, pp. 662ff.

⁸⁸² Gluckman points out the similarity to the Greek Adonia festival: Max Gluckman, *Rituals of Rebellion in South-East Africa*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1952. 5.

went naked and sang lewd songs, while males were prohibited from approaching. These acts were in strong contrast with usual female behavior.⁸⁸³

II.3 Drought Rituals of the Ba-Thonga.

A ritual similar to the parts of the Thesmophoria festival during which piglets, which had been cast into pits at some prior period, were dredged out again and, mixed with seeds and other materials, were laid on Demeter's altars, is performed by the Ba-Thonga. The women, during periods of drought, assemble, strip ("only putting some grass round their loins") and dance, singing a song "Rain, fall!" Junod describes their subsequent actions:

They go to all the spots where children prematurely born have been buried in dry ground, on the hills, take away what they find in the broken pots, and collect all that impure matter in a secret place so that children may see nothing of what they are doing. Water is poured on these graves in order to "quench them." On the evening of the same day they go and bury these impurities; this is done in the mud near the river. No man must approach during this operation; the women would have the right to strike the imprudent one, and ask him questions [with obscenities]... the man would answer in the most impure words he could find, as all language taboos are suspended on that day...⁸⁸⁴

The separation of the sexes, the use of obscenities, and the re-arranging of decayed flesh, with all these ritual actions in the service of restoring interrupted agricultural fertility – all are similar to the Thesmophoria.

II.4 Rituals for Removing Insects among the Ba-Thonga.

⁸⁸³ Max Gluckman, *Rituals of Rebellion in South-East Africa*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1952. 6. No examples of these songs are given.

⁸⁸⁴ Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe*. 316.

Another connection between ritual obscenity and agriculture among the Ba-Thonga is the ceremony during which insects are picked off of the crops and thrown into a lake, since this is accompanied by obscene songs.⁸⁸⁵

II.5 Rain Ceremony of the A-Kamba.

The A-Kamba of Kenya have a rain ceremony that, like that of the Ba-Thonga, involves women singing obscene songs. Evans-Prichard gives one example:

Ea, eeh!
We come from afar
To find salt for the vulva.
The penis is lifted up.
*Uh, uh!*⁸⁸⁶

Lindblom, the recorder of this song, interpreted its meaning as “We come to get rain, so that we can get food for our husbands, who cannot accomplish their sexual duties if they are weak from hunger.”⁸⁸⁷

II.6 Rain Ceremony of the Lango.

Similar obscene songs are sung by women during the rain ceremonies of the Lango of Uganda, such as “The leopard lashes its tail under the fig-tree,” which was explained as “The penis lashes about under the female pudenda.”⁸⁸⁸

⁸⁸⁵ Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe*. 316.

⁸⁸⁶ Gerhard Lindblom, *The Akamba in British East Africa: An Ethnological Monograph*. Uppsala: Appelbergs, 1920, quoted in Evans-Pritchard, “Some Collective Expressions of Obscenity in Africa.” 318.

⁸⁸⁷ Gerhard Lindblom, *The Akamba in British East Africa: An Ethnological Monograph*. Uppsala: Appelbergs, 1920, quoted in Evans-Pritchard, “Some Collective Expressions of Obscenity in Africa.” 318.

II.7 Males Performing Obscene Agricultural Rituals

Several other African societies have agricultural rituals in which it is the male population who must perform obscene actions. Bolewa men who are heads of compounds must remove their outer garments, grind grain into flour, and make mealies – all of which are examples of female labor (in the same way that spinning wool, for example, was identified as a female labor in Greek antiquity). The women are very amused by these actions, which are carried out during rain rituals.⁸⁸⁹ Another tribe, the Lugbwara of Uganda, has a festival during the planting season during which men dance to erotic songs, reaching a state of semi-erection.⁸⁹⁰

III. *Mortuary Ceremonies*

III.1 Funeral Ceremonies of the Ba-Ila

Among the Ba-Ila of Northern Rhodesia, during funerals ceremonies, erotic songs are sung by the female mourners. Smith and Dale give examples of these; one is

Dear! dear! dear!
His great penis is a size!
It is a thing without an end.
It must have had a long unwinding.⁸⁹¹

⁸⁸⁸ J.H. Driberg, *Lango: A Nilotic Tribe of Uganda*. London: T.F. Unwin, 1923, quoted in Evans-Pritchard, "Some Collective Expressions of Obscenity in Africa." 321.

⁸⁸⁹ C.K. Meek, *Tribal Studies in Northern Nigeria*. London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1931. Vol. II, 303.

⁸⁹⁰ Driberg, oral communication, quoted in Evans-Pritchard, "Some Collective Expressions of Obscenity in Africa." 321.

The tribe also holds annual feasts for important ancestral spirits; about these festivals Smith and Dale say that “[t]here is always plenty of beer; much dancing and singing; charging up and down by men with their spears; lewd songs and a general license.”⁸⁹²

III.2 Funeral Ceremonies of the Ba-Thonga

A type of obscene song and dance very reminiscent of Iambe and Demeter occurs during the mortuary celebrations of the Ba-Thonga, which take place two or three months after someone has died. The family of the deceased is present, and a feast is given, during which the mortuary hut is dismantled. While the feast is preparing, the mourners begin to sing and dance. An elderly woman dances in the middle of the celebrants; Junod, in 1927, describes her:

Together with her song she performed a strange mimicry with her thighs. This mimicry took on a more and more lascivious character; it became a regular womb dance, so immoral that the men dropped their eyes as if they feared that she would take off all her clothing. . . . The words of her song were also of a very questionable character. She described an adulterous woman going during the night from one hut to another, seeking for lovers, knocking on the walls. . . .⁸⁹³

Here, again, is the encouragement to adultery. It is difficult to know what Junod meant by a “womb dance” - whether the old woman displayed her genitals or merely indicated or

⁸⁹¹ Quoted in Evans-Pritchard, “Some Collective Expressions of Obscenity in Africa.” 313.

⁸⁹² Edwin W. Smith and A. M. Dale, *The Ila-speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia*, London: Macmillan, 1920. 191.

⁸⁹³ Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe*. 315.

pantomimed them. Still, the correlation between recovery from mourning and an old woman displaying her genitals is very like the Demeter story.

III.3 Funeral Ceremonies of the A-Zande

Another use of obscenity at a feast celebrating the end of the mourning process was observed by Evans-Prichard among the A-Zande of Sudan.⁸⁹⁴ The women, while threshing grain to make beer for a feast given several years after the death of a man or woman, during which his or her grave is covered with a heap of stones, sing obscene songs. The same songs are also sung when the grain is ground. One or two women act as leaders, standing in the middle and making obscene motions. Evans-Prichard gives an example of these songs:

Mother of the feast, little stone is in your vulva.
Master of the ceremonies, little stone is in your vulva.
Relatives of the feast, little stone is in your vulva.
Son of my brother of the feast, little stone is in your vulva.
All the people of the feast, little stone is in your vulva.⁸⁹⁵

There is a long song sung only during the grinding; Evans-Prichard gives sample lines:

Oo! Oo! The vertical column of the clitoris, vulva. *Oo-ee-ee*
Penis, O! Penis, O! Vagina is calling you.⁸⁹⁶

The men avoid the women during these songs.⁸⁹⁷

⁸⁹⁴ Evans-Prichard, "Some Collective Expressions of Obscenity in Africa." 318-321.

⁸⁹⁵ Quoted in Evans-Prichard, "Some Collective Expressions of Obscenity in Africa." 319.

⁸⁹⁶ Evans-Prichard, "Some Collective Expressions of Obscenity in Africa." 320.

⁸⁹⁷ Evans-Prichard, "Some Collective Expressions of Obscenity in Africa." 320.

III.4 Various Other African Funerary Rituals.

There are many other African funerary rituals with aspects of ritual laughter among the Bondei, Ba-Congo, Tonga, Tallensi, Chewa, LoDagaba, and Ashanti peoples.⁸⁹⁸

III.6 Funerary Rituals of the Orokaiva.

Another society outside of Africa in which ritual joking appears during mortuary rites is that of the Orokaiva of Papua New Guinea.⁸⁹⁹ There, some time after the death of some prominent person or persons, a dance, feast, and dramatic performance are held. The spirits of the dead are summoned to come and watch, though Williams' informants differed as to whether these were all the dead or just those for whom the ceremony was performed.⁹⁰⁰ After the completion of the ritual, the costumes used during the performance are put on a raft along with food offerings and pushed into the river. The

⁸⁹⁸ Bondei: G. Dale, "An Account of the Principal Customs and Habits of the Natives Inhabiting the Bondei country," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, XXV (1896), pp. 181-239. 237. Ba-Congo: G. Cyril Claridge, *Wild Bush Tribes of Tropical Africa*. London: Seeley, Service and Co., 1922. 292. Tonga: E. Colson, "Clans and the Joking Relationship among the Plateau Tonga of Northern Rhodesia," *Kroeber Anthropological Society Papers*, 8/9 (1953), pp. 45-60. 54. Tallensi: M. Fortes, *The Dynamics of Clanship among the Tallensi*. Oxford: University Press, 1945. 92-95. Chewa: A. G. O. Hodgson, "Notes on the Achewa and Angoni of the Dowa district of the Nyasaland Protectorate," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, LXIII (1933), pp. 123-64. 156. The LoDagaba insult the dead man to "counter the sense of loss felt by the close relatives": J. Goody, "Fields of Social Control among the LoDagaba," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 87 (1957), pp. 75-104. 91. Ashanti parents upon the death of an infant shave their heads (a token of joy), dress in white (an insult at funerals), and eat groundnut soup (symbolic of a joyous feast): R.S. Rattray, *Religion and Art in Ashanti*. London: Oxford University Press, 1954. 60.

⁸⁹⁹ F. E. Williams, *Orokaiva Society*. London: Oxford University Press, 1930. Williams declares his disapproval of the obscene clowning and farces, but he seems to have recorded most of their details without overmuch bias.

⁹⁰⁰ Williams, *Orokaiva Society*, 254.

spirit (or spirits) of the dead is thought to accompany these paraphernalia and depart as well.⁹⁰¹ Some participants further claimed that the celebration was a placatory offering to these spirits, put on precisely so that they might depart.⁹⁰² The dramatic performance is where the ritual humor occurs, and Williams describes it as being like a mime or farce. Handsome, unmasked actors take some parts, while masked actors take other, bumbling, comic parts. Williams calls these latter ‘clowns,’ though his informants called them *samuna*, “the bad one,” or *sovai*, “the spirit of the dead, the devil-devil.”⁹⁰³ All actors are male, though there are both ‘male’ and ‘female’ *samuna*; the ‘male’ wears a prominent costume phallus and, on the back of his costume, a red fruit (whether to represent the anus or, as Williams claims, “a sore between his buttocks,” is debatable).⁹⁰⁴ The plots of these short dramas can be those of traditional legends or simply repeat some comedic past incident from the life of the village, and the majority contain suggestive behavior on the part of the *samuna* (in pantomime – there is no dialogue) – for example, a male *samuna* making love to a female *samuna*.⁹⁰⁵ Only the *samuna* perform the sexual, obscene actions, not the unmasked actors.⁹⁰⁶ Here, as in the African examples, there are clear

⁹⁰¹ Williams, *Orokaiva Society*, 253.

⁹⁰² Williams, *Orokaiva Society*, 255.

⁹⁰³ Williams, *Orokaiva Society*, 244.

⁹⁰⁴ Williams, *Orokaiva Society*, 251.

⁹⁰⁵ Williams give examples of plots; seven out of these eleven sample plots contain suggestions of or attempts at love-making. Williams, *Orokaiva Society*, 240-245.

⁹⁰⁶ Williams adds that similar dances and dramas are part of the Orokaiva initiation ceremony. Williams, *Orokaiva Society*, 256.

connections between the end of the mortuary ritual, the propitiation of the dead, and obscene humor.

III.7 Funerary Ceremonies of the Kiwai Papuans

Similarly, at the *hóriómu* ceremony of the Kiwai Papuans of New Guinea, a ceremony in which the entire male population dresses up as spirits of the dead, for an audience of women and children, with the purpose of making successful the harpooning of the dugong, there are comic characters, the *imígi* spirits.⁹⁰⁷ Wearing costumes and masks, they mock-fight each other and other, less important spirits, steal each other's food, and harass the female spectators, "making improper gestures," and are then chased away "with exclamations of disgust."⁹⁰⁸ According to informants, the only object of the *imígi* is to "make people laugh."⁹⁰⁹ They, like the Orokaiva *samuna*, are supposed to be spirits of the dead, though the *imígi* are regarded as the spirits of still-born infants or children orphaned young, or children with an unknown father, and are consequently thought of as half-witted. Along the same lines, in the Kiwai Papuanian culture there are comic dancers who harass the female singers and dancers, during the ceremony of the fertility tree.⁹¹⁰

IV. *Ritual Clowns*

⁹⁰⁷ Gunnar Landtman, *The Kiwai Papuans of British New Guinea*. Macmillan: London, 1927. 338.

⁹⁰⁸ Landtman, *Kiwai Papuans of British New Guinea*, 338.

⁹⁰⁹ Landtman, *Kiwai Papuans of British New Guinea*, 338.

⁹¹⁰ Landtman, *Kiwai Papuans of British New Guinea*, 394.

Anthropologists have labeled performers in several different societies “ritual clowns.”⁹¹¹ It is worth discussing them here, though their relationship to Greek aischrologic practices is not clear, since ritual clowns are specially chosen actors who perform or improvise around set roles, and we do not know if those who performed *aischrologia* were either specially designated or scripted.

Anthropologists use the term “ritual clown” to indicate performers who are costumed and who engage in some sort of dramatic representation, whether this is scripted or improvisational. In the latter case, the ritual clown is still dramatic, in that he is still playing a role, unlike those who make jokes during African funerals discussed above, who maintain their own identity. Ritual clowning can have different functions. The ritual clowns of Orkinowa and Kiwai Papian mortuary rites have already been discussed. This section is reserved for a more lengthy description of ritual clowns whose functions are more ambiguous.

IV.1 Ritual Clowns of the Zuni, Hopi, and Navaho

Ritual clowning has been most well-studied among the Zuni, Hopi, and Navaho Indians of the American Southwest. Hieb has given the most complete description of a clown ceremony, and though he studied Hopi clowns, the general details are similar to Zuni and Navaho clown rituals.⁹¹² Clowns are chosen by the sponsor of a dance (clowns can

⁹¹¹ The first cross-cultural survey of ritual clowning was that of Lucile Hoerr Charles, “The Clown’s Function,” *Journal of American Folklore*, 58. 227. (1945), pp. 25-34. A convenient modern survey of the literature can be found in Handelman, “Ritual Clown.” See also Laura Makarius, “Ritual Clowns and Symbolic Behavior.” Trans. Raoul Makarius. *Diogenes* 69 (1970), pp. 44-73.

⁹¹² Hieb, *The Hopi Ritual Clown*. 169-224. See also his “Meaning and Mismeaning: Toward an Understanding of the Ritual Clown,” in *New Perspectives on the Pueblos*, ed. Alfonso Ortiz. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1972. pp. 163-196. The

appear at various types of dances), but are sometimes permanent members of a ritual clown society. They dress up in ragged costumes and makeup designed to make them appear as opposite as possible from the dignified masked *kachina* dancers who will perform the main ceremonies. During breaks in the *kachina* dances, the clowns come into the public square and engage in a variety of joking behavior with each other, the *kachina* dancers, and the spectators: obscene jokes, slapstick, burlesque of the dances, and the handling or consuming of waste and trash of various sorts, including human waste, that

earliest account of ritual clowning in the American Southwest was that of John G. Bourke, "The Urine Dance of the Zunis," *American Association for Advancement of Science. Proceedings*, vol. 34 (1885), pp. 400-403. Reprinted in his *Scatalogic Rites of All Nations*. Washington, D.C.: W.H. Lowdermilk, 1891. pp. 4-10. Other primary studies of Southwestern ritual clowning: F.H. Cushing, "Outlines of Zuni Creation Myths," in *Thirteenth Annual Report, Bureau of Ethnology*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1896. pp. 325-447; J. Walter Fewkes, "A Few Summer Ceremonials at Zuni Pueblo," *Journal of American Ethnology and Archaeology*, 1 (1891), pp. 1-62; Elsie Clews Parsons, "Notes on Zuni, Part I," *Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association*, 4.3 (1917); Elsie Clews Parsons, "Winter and Summer Dance Series in Zuni in 1918," *University of California Publications in American Archaeology & Ethnology*, 17.3 (1922), pp. 171-216; Julian Steward, "The Ceremonial Buffoon of the American Indian," *Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts and Letters*, 14 (1930), pp. 187-207; Ruth L. Bunzell, *Introduction to Zuni Ceremonialism*. Bureau of American Ethnology, Forty-Seventh Annual Report. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institute, 1932. Reprinted in her *Zuni Ceremonialism*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992; Elsie Clews Parsons, *Pueblo Indian Religion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939; Elsie Clews Parsons and Ralph L. Beals, "The Sacred Clowns of the Pueblo and Mayo-Yaqui Indians," *American Anthropologist*, 36.4 (1934), pp. 491-514; Alexander M Stephen, *The Hopi Journal of Alexander M. Stephen*, ed. Elsie Clews Parsons. Columbia University Contributions to Anthropology, no. 23. Columbia University Press, New York, 1936; Don C. Talayesva, *Sun Chief: The Autobiography of a Hopi Indian*. Leo W. Simmons, Ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942; Vera Laski, *Seeking Life. Memoirs of the American Folklore Society*, vol. 50. Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1958. Another full-length study is Julian Haynes Steward, *The Clown in Native North America*. Diss, University of California, 1929. Reprinted New York: Garland Publishing, 1991.

so fascinated early observers.⁹¹³ Much of the humor is sexual in nature.⁹¹⁴ Most central to the ritual is a sequence of events in which the clowns “build” a house by drawing its outlines in ashes and placing within it a doll, then receiving there their “aunts,” various

⁹¹³ Bourke was particularly fascinated and repelled; observing Zuni clowns drink urine led him to write a *magnum opus* (later praised by Freud) on the uses of human waste the world over: John G. Bourke, “The Urine Dance of the Zunis,” *American Association for Advancement of Science. Proceedings*, vol. 34 (1885), pp. 400-403; John G. Bourke *Scatalogic Rites of All Nations*. Washington, D.C.: W.H. Lowdermilk, 1891. Other early observers’ fascination with this type of clowning is summarized by J. Steward, “The Ceremonial Buffoon of the American Indian,” *Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts and Letters*, 14 (1930), pp. 187-207. A more modern view of these rituals is put forward in Edward Norbeck and Claire R. Farrar, eds., *Forms of Play of Native North Americans*. St. Paul, MN: Proceedings of the American Ethnological Society, 1979.

⁹¹⁴ Zuni *Koyemshi* wear and pretend to strike onlookers with imitation phalloi, and also encourage sexual license during *Shalako* ceremony. Phalloi: Elsie Clews Parsons, “Notes on Zuni, Part I,” *Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association*, 4.3 (1917), 231-2. Encourage license: Elsie Clews Parsons, “Notes on Zuni, Part I,” *Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association*, 4.3 (1917), 187-8; Matilda C Stevenson, “The Zuni Indians: Their Mythology, Esoteric Fraternities and Ceremonies,” *Twenty-third Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904. 224-7, 235-6, 276-7. Coyote-type clown of Yokuts and the western Mono makes obscene pretended advances towards young girls: Gayton, field notes, cited in Julian Haynes Steward, *The Clown in Native North America*. Diss, University of California, 1929. Reprinted New York: Garland Publishing, 1991. 88. Ponca clowns of the Plains Indians may touch female spectators’ genitalia: A. Skinner, “Ponca Societies and Dances,” *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History*, 11 (1915), pp. 777-801. 789. The ritual clowns of the Wukchumni Indians of California also burlesque sexual intercourse: A.H. Layton, *Yokuts and Western Mono Ethnography*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1948. Talayesva gives examples of obscene clowning in his “autobiography” – a collection of answers to questions polished and edited by Simmons. For example: “The clowns frequently captured women and imitated the sexual act in the open plaza to entertain the people. On some occasions they fastened long gourd necks in front of them and pursued the women.” Don C. Talayesva, *Sun Chief: The Autobiography of a Hopi Indian*. Leo W. Simmons, ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942. 76. Talayesva was later a clown himself, and describes his own obscene joking; during one dance, for example, he describes himself as having is “presented my buttocks with bold gestures”. Don C. Talayesva, *Sun Chief: The Autobiography of a Hopi Indian*. Leo W. Simmons, Ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942. 304. One can see in this phrase the difficulty the editor had in ‘translating’ the probably less delicate phrases of his informant.

female relatives who have cooked large amounts of food for them to eat. Clowning and serious *kachina* performances alternate and mingle for the entirety of the dance, which can last for several days. Towards the end of the dance, warning figures - different types of *kachina* dancers - begin to appear, cautioning the clowns about the unacceptable nature of their behavior. The clowns ignore or mock them, but eventually, at the end of the dance, *kachinas* appear who punish the clowns by whipping them, and their 'house' is destroyed. The *kachinas* then throw buckets of water at the crowd as symbolic purification. The clowns are washed clean of their makeup, their costuming is pulled off, and they are compelled by the *kachinas* to make "confessions," which mainly consist of telling obscene stories about women, usually the wives of the clowns.

The purpose of this clowning is not clear, and there are various reasons why. First, the range of the phenomenon is not certain – ritual clowns might have operated outside of the American Southwest, but the accidents of data-collection mean that we do not have much evidence outside of this area.⁹¹⁵ Secondly, there is the problem of the influence of missionary religions, though this has affected the Mexican evidence more than the American, as will be seen. Thirdly, observers have collected an abundance of native explanations for the ritual clowns, but it is difficult to fit these together. And lastly, alongside of this seeming willingness to provide access to and explanations for the ritual clowns, there was and is the well-known reluctance of Pueblo Indians to yield the details

⁹¹⁵ For example, there is the intriguing statement offered, with no cited evidence, by Speck, that clown performances among the Creek Indians of North America are connected with religious beliefs about procreation: Frank G. Speck, "The Creek Indians of Taskigi Town," *Memoir of the American Anthropological Association*, 2 (1907), pp. 99-164. 138-40.

of their religion to outsiders. Still, some conclusions can be drawn after these explanations and modern theories have been reviewed.

The native explanations for the clowns focus on their child-like status and their final punishment and purification:

The clowns represent ourselves. They do all the things we do... The clowns act like children. They don't know how to behave. They come down the ladder head-first, make jokes. The *kachinas* do not take any notice of the clowns. The *kachinas* are always the same. They represent the unchanging law – eternity. The clowns finally confess their bad behavior but in a funny way. The crowd laughs. Then the clowns are whipped by the *kachinas* and have water poured on them for purification.⁹¹⁶

Again, in traditions of the Eagle Clan of the Hopi,

the clown is there on behalf of everybody, of all people. He does everything, presents all the faults of mankind. The clown publicly puts himself forth that way. He depicts people who at the beginning of life were instructed to do this. This is their punishment. They become servants to the person who possesses the breath of life.⁹¹⁷

The behavior of the clowns is very much opposed to normal Pueblo Indian culture, in which casual physical contact is uncommon, gossiping is frowned upon, and public displays of sexuality are very restrained.⁹¹⁸ Clearly, the clown's "bad behavior" is central to his meaning, but how?

⁹¹⁶ Reported in Laura Thompson, *Culture in Crisis: A Study of the Hopi Indians*. New York: Harper, 1950. 130. Hieb notes that this account has reversed the actual order of events, during which the "confession" comes after the purification. Similarly, Talayesva reports the sponsor of a dance saying to the clowns that "I am glad you are here to dance for our people and make us happy." Don C. Talayesva, *Sun Chief: The Autobiography of a Hopi Indian*. Leo W. Simmons, Ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942. 186.

⁹¹⁷ Hieb, *The Hopi Ritual Clown*. 146.

⁹¹⁸ Normal restraint: Elsie Clews Parsons and Ralph L. Beals, "The Sacred Clowns of the Pueblo and Mayo-Yaqui Indians," *American Anthropologist*, 36.4 (1934), pp. 491-514. 499.

Anthropologists have offered several social explanations for these ritual clowns. There is the inevitable comic-relief proposal – that the clowns lessen the stress of correctly performing detailed ritual dances.⁹¹⁹ A similar strain of opinion holds that the clowning is meant to attract more attention to the dances, since they are enjoyable and, in fact, the amount of spectators is greater when the ritual features clowns than when it does not.⁹²⁰ There is also the thought that the sex-play of the clowns can act as sexual instruction for the youth of a culture reluctant to discuss such matters in everyday life, and indeed at least one native account confirms this.⁹²¹ There is little doubt that the clowns can act as what Hieb dubs “practical ethicists,” using humor to deal with problematic situations – either social or spiritual.⁹²² The clowns can put on skits mocking

David compares these actions of the American Indian ritual clown to the Spartans’ parading of drunken helots, who were made to sing and dance vulgar and grotesque songs and dances in order that Spartan youth should not desire drunkenness. Ephraim David, “Laughter in Spartan Society” in *Classical Sparta: Techniques Behind her Success*, ed. Anton Powell. London: Routledge, 1989. pp. 1-25. 7, citing Plutarch, *Lyn* 28.9

⁹¹⁹ Julian Haynes Steward, *The Clown in Native North America*. Diss, University of California, 1929. Reprinted New York: Garland Publishing, 1991. 82.

⁹²⁰ Elsie Clews Parsons and Ralph L. Beals, “The Sacred Clowns of the Pueblo and Mayo-Yaqui Indians,” *American Anthropologist*, 36.4 (1934), pp. 491-514. 499. One might also attribute this difference in spectatorship to levels of importance of rituals – those featuring clowns might be more important than others, and thus more likely to be attended for their own sake, not simply for the clowns.

⁹²¹ Elsie Clews Parsons and Ralph L. Beals, “The Sacred Clowns of the Pueblo and Mayo-Yaqui Indians,” *American Anthropologist*, 36.4 (1934), pp. 491-514. 500. Talayesva attributes some of his early education in sexual matters to ritual clowns: Don C. Talayesva, *Sun Chief: The Autobiography of a Hopi Indian*. Leo W. Simmons, Ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942. 76.

⁹²² Hieb, *The Hopi Ritual Clown*. Hieb is not the first to put forward this theory: “In general the clowns have a punitive and policing function in ceremonial matters and through their license in speech and song a somewhat similar function in domestic matters, ridicule being a strong weapon among the Pueblos.” Elsie Clews Parsons and Ralph L.

tourists, alcoholics, the failings of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, those who are more interested in fashion than farming, and modern women who are promiscuous and can't cook.⁹²³ Thus, some clowning actions which would at first seem comparable to Greek rituals may in the end have a different explanation; for example, a skit reported to Hieb by a native informant:

...at Hotevilla there was a skit about a woman of the streets, one from a house of ill-fame, in Hopi, a *luwalhuwaka*, literally, one who sells her own sex organ. This woman *piptuka* [type of clown] came into the plaza with a briefcase. The clowns said, "What are you doing here? "I'm a *luwalhuwaka*." "Let's see what you've got." The case she then opened was full of clay models of the female organ of different sizes. She laid them out in a row. Some were plain, some had horse hair on them... wool, and so on. There were all different sizes. Clowns: "Which one should I buy." "This one looks good." "This one is too small." "How do I know which one I want?" So those guys tried it out, went through the motions right there. It was hilarious to the crowd.⁹²⁴

This could seem similar to the handling of models of male and female genitalia during the Greek Haloa, but, given the moralizing nature of most Pueblo clowning, it would appear that the purpose of this skit is to preach against prostitution, rather than, as at the Haloa, to encourage sexual acts.

Beals, "The Sacred Clowns of the Pueblo and Mayo-Yaqui Indians," *American Anthropologist*, 36.4 (1934), pp. 491-514. 499.

⁹²³ Tourists: "First several clowns ran into the plaza carrying small black boxes, and then proceeded to 'take picture' of everything in sight and from every imaginable angle. They even dragged people out of the houses and made them assume ridiculous poses." Edward A. Kennard, *Hopi Kachinas*. New York: JJ Augustin, 1938. 31-32. For the others, see Hieb, *The Hopi Ritual Clown*. 185-6.

Pòrtulas has suggested that the humorous insults in Archilochus' poetry should be understood along the same lines as these clowning criticism, as ritualized social control. Jaume Pòrtulas, "Archiloco: *Humour e Rituale*," in *Tradizione e Innovazione nella Cultura Greca da Omero all'Età Ellenistica: Scritti in Onore di Bruno Gentili*, ed. Roberto Pretagostini. Rome: Gruppo Editoriale Internazionale, 1993. Vol. 1, pp. 211-216.

⁹²⁴ Hieb, *The Hopi Ritual Clown*. 186.

The most complex of the modern theorists of Pueblo clowning is Hieb, who provides a structuralist reading of the clowns. He thinks that they “reverse, invert, and transpose the normal meaning (structure or ‘reality’) of culture and society,” and that they are humorous because of the immediate and obvious demise of the “new option” for social structure that they offer.⁹²⁵ Thus, they function to show the value of the current social order by demonstrating the instability of its opposite. Specifically, Hieb proposes that the clan system of the Zuni, in which everyone is equal, is reinforced by a display of temporary inequality.⁹²⁶ Hieb explains the prevalence of scatological humor and manipulation of dirt and waste by citing the theory of Douglas, that dirt can be a symbol for “unorganized, uncontrolled relations.”⁹²⁷

As convincing as these social functions may be, Pueblo ritual clowns cannot be fully explained unless their ritual purpose is also understood. Because of the limitations noted above, it is difficult to exactly ascertain this, but it is certain that ritual clowns are closely connected with rain ceremonies. The Zuni *Koyemshi* clown society make monthly prayer-stick offerings for moisture and participate in the summer *kachina* dances for rain; their masks are in the custody of a rain priesthood.⁹²⁸ Talayesva, a ritual clown himself, provides more evidence for linking clowns to rain. He reports one clown saying to his

⁹²⁵ Hieb, *The Hopi Ritual Clown*. 165.

⁹²⁶ Hieb, *The Hopi Ritual Clown*. 167. Hieb interprets the *Holi* festival in the same way, as a reinforcement of the caste system by a temporary display of equality.

⁹²⁷ Hieb, *The Hopi Ritual Clown*. 191, citing Douglas, “The Social Control of Cognition.” 157.

⁹²⁸ Elsie Clews Parsons and Ralph L. Beals, “The Sacred Clowns of the Pueblo and Mayo-Yaqui Indians,” *American Anthropologist*, 36.4 (1934), pp. 491-514. 494. Parsons and Beals thought that the Hopi clowns had little connection with religious rituals, but Hieb’s observations prove otherwise.

fellow “My partners, let us go over there with happy hearts.... We will put our hearts together, praying to the Six-Point-Cloud-People for rain.” The clowns then jump up and down to represent, Talayesva claims, clouds rising from the four directions.⁹²⁹ They then pretend to have intercourse with a *kachina* dressed as a burlesque on the deity Corn Maiden - the *kachina* is actually costumed as ugly old woman - telling each other that “[t]his old Kachina is impersonating the Corn Maiden; therefore we must have intercourse with her so that our corn will increase and our people will live in plenty.”⁹³⁰ Talayesva even relates the ceremonial purification to rain: “At sundown we were soundly whipped to bring rain.”⁹³¹ The connection between agricultural fertility and ritual clowning are here clear.

IV. Ritual Clowning in Mexico

There are several other examples of ritual clowning in cultures which have been converted by missionaries to Catholicism, but which seem to still retain and demonstrate elements of native religion pertinent to a study of *aischrologia*.⁹³²

⁹²⁹ Don C. Talayesva, *Sun Chief: The Autobiography of a Hopi Indian*. Leo W. Simmons, Ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942. 187.

⁹³⁰ Don C. Talayesva, *Sun Chief: The Autobiography of a Hopi Indian*. Leo W. Simmons, Ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942. 190. Talayesva presents himself as the hero of this episode, persuading his fellow clowns to go through with the pretend intercourse even though they are ashamed to do so in front of the observing white school principal.

⁹³¹ Don C. Talayesva, *Sun Chief: The Autobiography of a Hopi Indian*. Leo W. Simmons, Ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942. 279.

⁹³² Beals, at least, thought that both the Mexican and Pueblo ritual clowns were decedents of the devil-clown of European medieval miracle play and religious folk dances,

The first of these are the *Capakobam*, ritual clowns that appear during Lent among the Mayo Indians of northwestern Mexico.⁹³³ Costumed and masked, they are in some ways protectors of custom, for they are in charge of patrolling the path of the procession, forcing spectators to kneel and keeping them awake during vigils in church.⁹³⁴ They also act as guardians for the image of Christ and enforce correct costume and behavior among the inhabitants.⁹³⁵ At other times, they are burlesquers of tradition, for example, by pretending to defecate upon the cross.⁹³⁶ They can also tell obscene jokes

introduced by Spanish missionaries for their own purposes. Elsie Clews Parsons and Ralph L. Beals, "The Sacred Clowns of the Pueblo and Mayo-Yaqui Indians," *American Anthropologist*, 36.4 (1934), pp. 491-514. 504. Although this is conceivable, the ritual clowns seem too well integrated into Pueblo religion to be foreign introductions; as well, that the burlesques of marriage, healing, and other ceremonies of the Mexican clowns are accretions upon the Church-based role rather than survivals from a prior religion seems unlikely. As well, there is at least one pre-Conquest description of ritual clowning in Mexico, from the Spanish priest Fray Diego de Landa; see translation in Alfred M. Tozzer, *Landa's Relación*. Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, vol. 18. Cambridge, Mass.: Peabody Museum, 1941. 158, and discussion in Victoria Reifler Bricker, *Ritual Humor in Highland Chiapas*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973. xv.

⁹³³ These were first studied in Elsie Clews Parsons and Ralph L. Beals, "The Sacred Clowns of the Pueblo and Mayo-Yaqui Indians," *American Anthropologist*, 36.4 (1934), pp. 491-514. 503-514; and then by N. Ross Crumrine, "Capakoba, the Mayo Easter Ceremonial Impersonator: Explanations of Ritual Clowning," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 8.1 (1969), pp. 1-22.

⁹³⁴ Crumrine, "Capakoba, the Mayo Easter Ceremonial Impersonator." 4.

⁹³⁵ Elsie Clews Parsons and Ralph L. Beals, "The Sacred Clowns of the Pueblo and Mayo-Yaqui Indians," *American Anthropologist*, 36.4 (1934), pp. 491-514. 503.

⁹³⁶ Crumrine, "Capakoba, the Mayo Easter Ceremonial Impersonator." 7. Parsons and Beals describe other burlesquing behaviors of Mayo ritual clowns at San Ignacio during a procession: "These masked men teased one another; they fell over dogs and rolled in the dust; they displayed mock fear; they set a doll on the ground to venerate it as a saint; and they simulated eating and drinking the excreta they would pretend to catch in their wooden machete from the body of passing burro or horse or man or woman, even of one kneeling in prayer." Elsie Clews Parsons and Ralph L. Beals, "The Sacred Clowns of the

and stories during breaks in festal dancing: “‘How well you danced,’ a spectator may say. ‘Surely, that was because I slept with your wife last night,’ may be the reply.”⁹³⁷ They also burlesque marriage and healing ceremonies.⁹³⁸ At the end of Easter week, the *Capakobam* take off their masks and the actors are re-baptized, later burning the masks.⁹³⁹

Another point of comparison with Greek and other cultures is that during the *Tinieblas* ceremony on the Wednesday night of Easter week, the church is darkened and the *Capakobam* yell and bang on their drums, frightening the women and children, but fleeing from the church when the first candle is relit. At this time, a *Capakoba* is referred to as a *mukila*, a dead person.⁹⁴⁰ This is reminiscent of the mixture of ritual humor and visitations of spirits of the dead during the Greek Anthesteria.

Pueblo and Mayo-Yaqui Indians,” *American Anthropologist*, 36.4 (1934), pp. 491-514. 491.

⁹³⁷ Elsie Clews Parsons and Ralph L. Beals, “The Sacred Clowns of the Pueblo and Mayo-Yaqui Indians,” *American Anthropologist*, 36.4 (1934), pp. 491-514. 504.

⁹³⁸ “A *Capakoba* takes the end of his long embroidered face cloth and puts it over the top of his mask, looping the end between the teeth of the mask. This is the position in which women wear their *rebozos* in a wind or if a stranger is present. The “female” impersonator *Capakoba* takes the arm of another *Capakoba* and the two march, with great pomp, from the end of the church up the center to the altar. One of the young unmarried women whispers to my wife, ‘They are getting married.’ A third *Capakoba* with a brown furry mask keeps disturbing and teasing them. After the “marriage” at the altar the “bride” runs to the brown *Capakoba* and there ensues much horse play. They press their masks together, giving a very realistic illusion of a kiss. They “kiss” several times and then pantomime sexual intercourse. One of them lies with his back on the floor. The second *Capakoba* lies with one of his legs between the two legs of the one on the floor in a face to face position. With a little suggestive bouncing, the performance is complete.” Crumrine, “Capakoba, the Mayo Easter Ceremonial Impersonator.” 2.

⁹³⁹ Crumrine, “Capakoba, the Mayo Easter Ceremonial Impersonator.” 5.

⁹⁴⁰ Crumrine, “Capakoba, the Mayo Easter Ceremonial Impersonator.” 4.

More interesting is the ritual clowning of the Zinacanteco Indians of Chiapas, Mexico, for, even though these rituals are integrated into Catholicism, there are so many elements extraneous to Church rituals that they must be carried over from the inhabitants' pre-Conquest Mayan religion.⁹⁴¹ This transference is more obvious than that of the Mayo Indians in part because the timing of the Zinacanteco Indians' ritual clowning - on the Church feasts of Carnival, Christmas, New Year's, and the sixth of January (the feast of the Epiphany), as well as the fiesta of San Sebastián (Jan. 18-22) - points to a prior role for ritual clowning in Mayan new year celebrations.⁹⁴² Bricker posits the days of Carnival have been used as the five *unlucj* "lost days," the final days of the Mayan year, when spirits called "Monkeys" and "Blackmen" took temporary control of the earth. This period is characterized by drunkenness, license, and obscenity; any man may assume the identity of a Monkey, Blackman, or a woman, and then drink and indulge in obscene behavior.⁹⁴³ These masqueraders also have license to make obscene and sacrilegious comments during religious rituals, and have moralizing functions as well, mocking sexual promiscuity or women who cannot cook or spin well. As is true for Pueblo culture, the Zinacanteco normally disapprove of displays of obscenity or sexuality.

⁹⁴¹ These ritual clowns have been studied by Bricker, *Ritual Humor in Highland Chiapas*.

⁹⁴² Bricker writes that many of their religious beliefs and practices "are Catholic in form but Mayan in meaning." Victoria Reifler Bricker, *Ritual Humor in Highland Chiapas*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973. 8. The occasions for ritual clowning differ from town to town. In Chamula and Chenalhó, it occurs only during Carnival. In Zinacantan, it occurs during Carnival as well as in the season between Christmas and the Epiphany, and during the fiesta of San Sebastián. Bricker, *Ritual Humor in Highland Chiapas*. 9.

⁹⁴³ Bricker, *Ritual Humor in Highland Chiapas*. 9.

More interesting than these freelance clowns are the bull-fighting and curing skits performed by appointed clowns during the period from Christmas to New Year's, observed by Bricker in the town of Zinacata.⁹⁴⁴ These performances take place in the courtyard of the house of the Mayordomo of the Rosary, inside and outside churches, during visits to the homes of other religious officials, and in front of the town hall. The actors (all male) are a man dressed as a bull, two boy "Angels," and two "Grandfathers" with two "Grandmothers." The couples enter, claiming to have just purchased the bull, and perform a mock bullfight. The Grandfathers fight the bull while the Grandmothers observe and "lift their skirts to exhibit their genitalia and prevent the Bull from killing their husbands."⁹⁴⁵ Bricker notes that the Zinacanteco Indians believe that women can tame "male" objects such as bulls or guns by exposing their genitals to them.⁹⁴⁶ The Grandmothers also try to tame the Bull and their 'horses' by placing their heads under their skirts. Despite these attempted interventions, the Bull charges and "gores" the Grandfathers. The Grandmothers rush in to help them, riding hobby-horses, whose ends they poke into the Grandfathers' groins, with accompanying sexual joking. The couples then appeal to an audience member of some rank – a political or religious official – who plays the role of a curer or bonesetter. The curer asks where the Grandfathers have been

⁹⁴⁴ For the following ritual, see Bricker, *Ritual Humor in Highland Chiapas*. 16-45.

⁹⁴⁵ Bricker, *Ritual Humor in Highland Chiapas*. 16.

⁹⁴⁶ Bricker, *Ritual Humor in Highland Chiapas*. 117. The actual performance of such exposures has not been witnessed by anthropologists, though according to the oral traditions of both Indians and Ladino settlers in Chamula, Chenalhó, and Zinacantan, Indian women did attempt it during the War of St. Rose (1869): Victoria Reifler Bricker, *The Indian Christ, the Indian King: The Historical Substrate of Maya Myth and Ritual*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981. 150. My thanks to Professor Bricker for confirming this in private communication.

wounded, and they say “back” or “legs,” but point always to their genitals. The curer passes the rattles that the Grandfather has been carrying over his wounds, usually hitting the Grandfather’s genitals *en route*, and often reaching over with the rattle to touch the genitals of one of the Grandmothers or even put the rattle up her skirt. The Grandfathers then jump up and dramatically display that they are cured. In subsequent episodes, the Grandfathers charge each other and are wounded by kicks from their ‘horses’; then, the Grandmothers ride the horses and are wounded by the Bull. All ‘wounds’ are cured by the official in the same way. The cures are accompanied by a chant, a parody of the chants of actual bone-setters:

Find your place, bones!
Find your place, muscles!
Don’t leave your hole, muscle!
Don’t leave your hole, bone!⁹⁴⁷

This is chanted over the Grandfathers; for the Grandmothers, the chant is:

Stay rigid, flesh!
Stay rigid, bone!
Don’t leave your stick, flesh!
Don’t leave your stick, devilish flesh!⁹⁴⁸

The sexual double entendres are indicated by the curer pointing with the rattle to the patients’ genitals – “bones” and “muscles” refer to the penis, and “place” and “hole” to the vagina. The curer also repeatedly tells the Grandparents that the Bull is bad, that it gores them and causes suffering and that they should not have bought it. On the last day of the fiesta, the Bull is captured and ritually killed. He ‘bleeds’ into a pot – his ‘blood’ is a rum liquor which has been prepared with mint leaves, onion, and chili – to color it red –

⁹⁴⁷ Bricker, *Ritual Humor in Highland Chiapas*. 30.

⁹⁴⁸ Bricker, *Ritual Humor in Highland Chiapas*. 30.

and everyone present is served from this pot. The Zinacantecos connect bulls to witchcraft, thinking that witches have the power to transform themselves into cows.⁹⁴⁹ Thus, Bricker thinks that the ritual killing of the Bull is in some an attempt to annually exorcise the community's evils.⁹⁵⁰

There are several elements of these Zinacanteco rituals valuable for a comparison with *aischrologia*. First is a belief in the power of the exposed female genitalia – here, to “tame” fierce, destructive powers. This can be paralleled in other cultures: for example, during epidemics, there are Zulu rites during which mothers of young children disrobe to frighten away the fever fiend.⁹⁵¹ Another is the connection between healing and sexual

⁹⁴⁹ Bricker, *Ritual Humor in Highland Chiapas*. 45.

⁹⁵⁰ Bricker, *Ritual Humor in Highland Chiapas*. 45.

⁹⁵¹ Rev A. Bryant, *The Zulu People: As They were Before the White Man Came*. Pietermaritzburg: Shuter and Shooter, 1949. 664. Another intriguing piece of evidence about the irresistible power of such exposures comes from an Eskimo myth, though it can only be glimpsed through an obscuring veil of 19th century recording language. This is a story about the approach to the underworld, where there is a female demon who tests approaching souls by trying to make them laugh; those who do show that they are still alive, since the dead cannot laugh: “The souls who go to the over-world have to pass the abode of a strange woman who dwells at the top of a high mountain. She is called *Erdlaverisskok* (i.e. the disemboweller), and her properties are a trough and a bloody knife. She beats upon a drum, dances with her own shadow, and says nothing but ‘My buttocks, etc.,’ or else sings ‘Ya, ha, ha, ha!’ When she turns her back she displays huge hindquarters, from which dangles a lean sea-scorpion; and when she turns sideways her mouth is twisted utterly askew, so that her face becomes horizontally oblong. When she bends forwards she can lick her own hindquarters, and when she bends sideways she can strike her cheek, with a loud smack, against her thigh. If you can look at her without laughing you are in no danger; but as soon as anyone begins to smile she throws away her drum, seizes him...and then greedily devours them.” Fridtjof Nansen, *Eskimo Life*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1894. 257-258, quoted in V. Propp, “Ritual Laughter in Folklore,” trans. Maxine L. Bronstein and Lee Haring, in *Theory and History of Folklore*, ed. Anatoly Liberman. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984. pp. 124-146. 129. The modesty of the translators would seem to have covered over something with the “etc.” in “My buttocks, etc.,” and in any case it seems clear that the

joking. There is the delicate balance between obscene joking and restored order shown by the ritual – that order is restored only when the obscenities of the ritual clowns have ceased, but that order must be maintained precisely through the performance of this obscenity.

Erdlaverisskok would be displaying her genitals with the described gyrations, and that the this dancing display by an old woman of her genitals is adjudged in this myth a thing at which no living human being could help laughing.

Appendix 7: Anthropological Theories of Ritual Laughter

This Appendix details some of the theories of ritual laughter summarized in or not adopted by the main body of my text.

Crumrine provides a good survey of theories offered to explain ritual laughter.⁹⁵²

One is a psychological-affective explanation, arguing that man has an animal or subconscious nature that is repressed by society, and that ritual laughter provides a socially acceptable “safety-valve” for reducing the tensions caused by this repression.⁹⁵³

⁹⁵² Crumrine, “Capakoba, the Mayo Easter Ceremonial Impersonator.” 11-18. Another recent survey of anthropological investigations of humor is Mahadev L. Apte, “Humor Research, Methodology, and Theory in Anthropology,” in *Handbook of Humor Research, Vol. 1*. Paul McGhee and Jeffrey Goldstein, eds. New York: Springer Verlag, 1983. pp. 183-212.

⁹⁵³ The “safety-valve” theory is eloquently expressed by Frederick Douglas, who describes the holidays given slaves as a “safety-valve to carry off the explosive elements.” Frederick Douglas, *My Bondage and Freedom*. New York: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1855. 253, quoted by in Jan Bremmer, *Roman Myth and Mythography (BICS Suppl. 52, 1987)*. 86 n. 43. That ritual laughter relieves tensions caused by social repression is maintained by Lucile Hoerr Charles, “The Clown's Function,” *Journal of American Folklore*, 58 (1945), pp. 25-34 (Charles has a Jungian philosophy); Michael de Ferdinandy, “Carnival and Revolution: A Psycho-theoretical Discourse on the Genesis of Revolution Wherein is Expounded the Relation between Carnival Masks and Misrule,” *Atlas* (1964), pp. 98-104; and the specifically Freudian theory of Jacob Levine, “Regression in Primitive Clowning,” *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 30 (1961), pp. 72-83: ritual clowning is “an instrument of social regulation” and a “socially acceptable mode of releasing libidinal, aggressive, and infantile impulses which might otherwise be expressed in antisocial behavior.” 72. The modern development of the theory holds that occasions such as Carnival operated as safety-valve for the members of a structured, hierarchical society: see Keith Thomas, “Work and Leisure in Pre-Industrial Society,” *Past and Present*, 29 (1964), pp. 50-62. 53-54. Apte catalogues other proponents of the safety-valve theory: Mahadev L. Apte, “Humor Research, Methodology, and Theory in Anthropology,” in *Handbook of Humor Research, Vol. 1*. Paul McGhee and Jeffrey Goldstein, eds. New York: Springer Verlag, 1983. pp. 183-212. 205-206. The “safety-valve” theory has also been expressed for antiquity: Murray held that “release, and not secret skepticism, is the motive of Aristophanes in flinging mockery at Dionysus and the

Crumrine argues against this theory that the Mayo ritual clowns, the Capakoba, are required to maintain ritual purity – not drinking alcohol or engaging in sexual relations, etc. – during their clowning, and that such a situation is hardly consistent with the release of bestial impulses.⁹⁵⁴ The same ritual purity and strict regulation of “license” is true from ritual jokers in other cultures. Apte’s objection to the “safety-valve” theory is that it does not explain why the site of the release is a religious ritual instead of any other type of social situation.⁹⁵⁵ Van den Berghe has a somewhat similar theory to the “safety-valve” one, but he holds that periods of ritual license allow for the expression, not of purely anti-social urges, but for certain impulses towards egalitarianism, good-fellowship, and etc. that held in check by socially-striated cultures.⁹⁵⁶ This thought can also support the ties between ritual laughter and marriage, where the license is an aid to the expression of feelings like sexual attraction that, while not necessary subconscious or bestial, are still not normally permitted open expression.

Another theory, that of Honigmann, holds that ritual clowning reduces anxiety about the taboo or the sacred by translating them into familiar form and then burlesquing

other gods,” and compared this release to that of the Feast of Fools. Gilbert Murray, *Aristophanes: A Study*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1937. 2.

⁹⁵⁴ Crumrine, “Capakoba, the Mayo Easter Ceremonial Impersonator.” 12.

⁹⁵⁵ Mahadev L. Apte, “Humor Research, Methodology, and Theory in Anthropology,” in *Handbook of Humor Research, Vol. 1*. Paul McGhee and Jeffrey Goldstein, eds. New York: Springer Verlag, 1983. pp. 183-212. 206.

⁹⁵⁶ Pierre L. Van den Berghe, “Institutional Licence and Normative Stability,” *Cahiers d’Etudes Africaines*, 3 (1963), pp. 413-423, 415.

them.⁹⁵⁷ Crumrine argues that this explanation is also not suitable, since the ritual clown is himself taboo and sacred.⁹⁵⁸ It can also be added that, though the ritual joker may burlesque the sacred, he does so for some further ritual purpose, and thus this burlesquing cannot be understood as a means of reducing anxiety about ritual, since it is ritual in itself.

Next, there is the sociological explanation of ritual laughter. One branch thinks of ritual laughter as having a policing function, using the opportunities of freer-than-usual speech to mock community members for their failings. Another common sociological argument is that ritual laughter is the ritual dramatization of conflict, especially the conflict attendant on any large community undertakings such as extended rituals or any other type of communal labor – building a new village or pounding grain, for instance.⁹⁵⁹ Ritual laughter expresses but also contains and provides an end-point for individual wishes not to carry out such labor.⁹⁶⁰ Perhaps more interesting that this applied

⁹⁵⁷ John J. Honigsmann, “An Interpretation of the Social-Psychological Functions of the Ritual Clown,” *Character and Personality (Journal of Personality)*, 10 (1942), pp. 220-226.

⁹⁵⁸ Crumrine, “Capakoba, the Mayo Easter Ceremonial Impersonator.” 13.

⁹⁵⁹ That ritual laughter aids production is one of the theories of Evans-Pritchard, “Some Collective Expressions of Obscenity in Africa”: “It gives both stimulus and reward to the workers during periods of joint and difficult labour, and through the special form of its expression, i.e. melody, it organizes the undertaking.” 331. Evans-Pritchard also posits the “safety-valve” function.

⁹⁶⁰ This is the theory of Edward H Spicer, “Potam, A Yaqui Village in Sonora,” *American Anthropological Association, Memoirs*, 77 (1954): “even reaction against the ritualization appears to be ritualized.” 174. Norbeck also thinks that periods of ritual license are “[r]itualized expressions of interpersonal and intergroup hostility”: Edward Norbeck, “African Rituals of Conflict,” *American Anthropologist*, 65.6 (1963), pp. 1254-1279. 1268.

sociological theory are the instances of actual reported belief that expressed conflict will somehow achieve group unity. This type of belief motivates ritual rebellions, discussed above, as well as smaller undertakings; for example, during the Zulu wedding ceremony, the bride is ritually insulted by her husband's relatives, who call her "a lazy good-for-nothing, of bad family, who is going to introduce quarrels," because "[o]pen expression of conflict within the group is believed to bring success, and to achieve the unity and prosperity of the wider group."⁹⁶¹ Similarly, Warner explains that ritual clowns prevent disputes during some ceremonies of the Australian Aborigines, because, if men begin to quarrel, a clown begins to eat absurdly, or burlesque their fighting, so that "[t]he general loud laughter from everyone keeps the angry one from committing any overt act; and since the clown and his audience express no hostility, the offended man cannot cause trouble."⁹⁶² Initiation at the Kabirion sanctuary in Boeotia was according to the sources open to all, and perhaps similar intervention was needed between men otherwise enemies. Of course, ritual laughter, like any other group behavior, tends to create a spirit of group purpose and solidarity, though this is not enough to explain its specific purpose.⁹⁶³

⁹⁶¹ Max Gluckman, *Custom and Conflict in Africa*. Glencoe: The Free Press, 1959. Chapter on "The Licence in Ritual," pp. 109-136. 119. Perhaps such behavior is a clue to the motivations of the competitive insults delivered by choruses of men and women during the worship of Demeter Mysia (Pausanias 7.29.9-10).

⁹⁶² W. L. Warner, *A Black Civilization: A Social Study of an Australian Tribe*. New York and London: Harper, 1937. 322.

⁹⁶³ On this function of ritual laughter, see Victor Turner, *Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1969. 94-130; and also in his *Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967. 93-102.

Crumrine is in favor of such sociological explanations, citing Gluckman and Nadel for the idea that rituals can dramatize social conflict.⁹⁶⁴ His ultimate choice for explaining ritual laughter is what he calls the “cultural-cognitive explanation.”⁹⁶⁵ He thinks that the behavior of ritual clowns, by breaking social rules and turning traditional social roles topsy-turvy, makes the audience think about the wisdom of the way in which their culture normally structures behavior and society. Crumrine is not the only scholar to hold such a theory. Hieb, for example, maintained that the temporary reversal of social order during Pueblo Indian clown performances showed their audiences the rightness of the usual social order.⁹⁶⁶

Douglas has given a sophisticated sociological analysis of the structure of ritual joking. She proposes that a joke is “a play upon form,” in that it brings into relation disparate elements so as to reveal a hidden pattern which challenges the accepted pattern in which it was hidden.⁹⁶⁷ She further characterizes these accepted and hidden patterns as that of conscious control versus that of the unconscious.⁹⁶⁸ As with the Freudian model of the interruptions of the unconscious into conscious life, the unconscious or hidden pattern does not take over life, but merely shows that all its patterns, especially its social patterns,

⁹⁶⁴ Crumrine, “Capakoba, the Mayo Easter Ceremonial Impersonator.” 15-17. Max Gluckman, *Custom and Conflict in Africa*. Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1959; S.F. Nadel, “Witchcraft in Four African Societies: An Essay in Comparison,” *American Anthropologist*, 54 (1952), pp. 18-29.

⁹⁶⁵ Crumrine, “Capakoba, the Mayo Easter Ceremonial Impersonator.” 18-20.

⁹⁶⁶ Louis Albert Hieb, *The Hopi Ritual Clown: Life as it Should Not Be*. (PhD 1972, Princeton University); see discussion of this idea, above.

⁹⁶⁷ Douglas, “The Social Control of Cognition,” 150.

⁹⁶⁸ Douglas, “The Social Control of Cognition.” 150.

have no necessity: the joke's excitement "lies in the suggestion that any particular ordering of experience may be arbitrary and subjective."⁹⁶⁹

Thus, for Douglas, a joke is normally the antithesis of a rite, for rites are meant to impose order on the universe, structuring everything along the lines of the conscious social pattern, while jokes serve to briefly reveal the futility of these attempts.⁹⁷⁰ Jokes in ritual must be interpreted as if they were rites; that is, the interpreter must try to find what their destructive efforts are aimed at ritually creating. Like Van den Berghe, Douglas thinks that ritual jokes, by devaluing normal social structure, celebrate other, ordinarily submerged or unappreciated levels of social relations.⁹⁷¹ These levels, Douglas suggests, are what Turner called "community" – relations of good fellowship and spontaneous affections, relations which are disorganized and non-hierarchical, relations which are normally more strictly controlled in the structure of social life.⁹⁷² Douglas writes that laughter and jokes, since they attack hierarchy, are fit symbols of this type of "community."

Douglas' theory, as well as most of the others just summarized, is focused on the social role of ritual laughter. There are far fewer scholars who have attempted to address ritual laughter's actual role in religion.⁹⁷³ In fact, several early scholars, even though they

⁹⁶⁹ Douglas, "The Social Control of Cognition." 150.

⁹⁷⁰ On the relation of jokes and rites: Douglas, "The Social Control of Cognition." 154-160.

⁹⁷¹ Douglas, "The Social Control of Cognition." 156.

⁹⁷² Douglas, "The Social Control of Cognition." 156. Victor Turner, *Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1969.

studied ritual laughter in the context of religion, thought that it had no true place in religion. Thus Fluck and Usener thought that people merely realized that they needed to cheer themselves after bereavement or Lent, and thus made themselves laugh.⁹⁷⁴ Similarly, Fehrle held that laughter was established as a religious custom because religious leaders decided that laughter made people healthier and better able to cope with reality.⁹⁷⁵ Propp, writing the first synthetic analysis of ritual laughter, criticized these essays as “attempts at explanations, or rather guesses,” since they did not draw conclusions from their data, but rather appealed to “everyday experience,” giving crudely rationalistic or abstract philosophical explanations.⁹⁷⁶

Propp himself collected a number of examples of laughter from different historical periods of different peoples, from their folklore, myth, beliefs, rituals, and games, and argued that certain categories or types of laughter were characteristic of peoples at a certain stage in their economic and social development. His first category features stories about the absence of laughter among the dead or during death-like states such as initiation. He thinks that this interdiction of laughter is matched by a belief in the

⁹⁷³ For a survey of anthropological investigations of humor in religion, see Mahadev L. Apte, “Humor Research, Methodology, and Theory in Anthropology,” in *Handbook of Humor Research, Vol. 1*. Paul McGhee and Jeffrey Goldstein, eds. New York: Springer Verlag, 1983. pp. 183-212. 189-192. Apte notes that such studies are focused on North American Indian tribes and cultures in sub-Saharan Africa, with some attention to South Asia for its *Holi* ritual. The majority of the bibliography she gives has been discussed in this chapter.

⁹⁷⁴ Hans Fluck, “Der Risus Paschalis,” *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, 31 (1934), pp. 188-212. Hermann K Usener, “Klagen und Lachen,” *Kleine Schriften*, vol. 4. Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1913.

⁹⁷⁵ Eugen Fehrle, “Das Lachen im Glauben der Völker,” *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde*, 2 (1930), pp. 1-5.

⁹⁷⁶ Propp, 126.

life-giving power of laughter, and points to beliefs about laughter causing pregnancy or returns to life being accompanied by laughter. His theory is that these beliefs are characteristic of hunter-gatherer societies which attribute all fertility to the female, not understanding the role of the male, and that these societies use ritual laughter to attempt to increase the propagation of their tribe.⁹⁷⁷ He admits that cannot explain why laughter is the action chosen for this result – for him, laughter is merely a “convulsive effort” like any other.⁹⁷⁸ In the next stage of development, with the development of agriculture, societies may have a better understanding of the necessity of the male for human propagations, but still use laughter to try to assure the earth’s fertility.⁹⁷⁹

Propp made a valuable contribution to the study of ritual laughter by arguing that, as a ritual, it must have a function within the religious cosmos of its performers, and also that this role might be elucidated by comparison with other cultures. Still, his conclusions cannot be wholly accepted. Firstly, because there is now available a far greater range of comparisons, thanks to increased anthropological work since he wrote his essay. Secondly, and more importantly, because his generalizations do not apply to Greek culture. The Greek dead frequently laugh: there are gales of laughter in Aristophanes’ *Frogs*, and even Hades himself smiles (though treacherously) in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*.⁹⁸⁰ As Halliwell has noted, the connection between laughter and death can be almost obsessive in Greek literature.⁹⁸¹

⁹⁷⁷ Propp, 135.

⁹⁷⁸ Propp, 136.

⁹⁷⁹ Propp, 137-138.

Few since Propp have attempted to address ritual laughter's relation to religion, perhaps because of the reaction against early 20th century treatments of ritual license by Frazer, Harrison, and their followers. The most comprehensive modern survey of the phenomenon of ritual laughter is that of Gilhus - *Laughing Gods, Weeping Virgins: Laughter in the History of Religion* – but Gilhus is a scholar of Christianity, and so the section on Greece is heavily dependent on secondary scholarship and adds little to preexisting discussions, agreeing that ritual laughter had purposes of venting social tensions, policing behavior by mocking offenders, and adding to a transcendent religious experience during the worship of Dionysos.⁹⁸² Gilhus posits that “ludicrous meanings in religion,” though they are different in their particulars in each culture, are often clustered into two “phenomenological fields”: the first, that of “creation and birth, joy, sexuality and eroticism; food and intoxicating drinks; feasts and comedies; dancing; ecstasy, madness and wisdom,” the other of “destruction and death; derision and shame; ridicule and blasphemy; tragedy.”⁹⁸³ Gilhus concludes that these areas are opposed to one another

⁹⁸⁰ On this incident, see Silvia Milanezi "Le rire d'Hadès," *Dialogues d'histoire ancienne*, 21 (1995), pp. 231-245.

⁹⁸¹ “The strange, potentially unnerving conjunction of laughter and death is a subject in its own right; it assumes numerous guises in ancient Greek texts, from, say, Odysseus; viscerally raucous laughter after the killing of Dolon and the Thracians in *Iliad* 10 to Christian narratives of the mockery of Christ both before and after crucifixion.” Stephen Halliwell, “Greek Laughter and the Problem of the Absurd,” *Arion* 13 (2005), pp. 121-46. 137.

⁹⁸² Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, *Laughing Gods, Weeping Virgins: Laughter in the History of Religion*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997. pp. 28-42. The most notable sign of Gilhus' attention to contemporary scholarship is in the attention paid to the role of women in *aischrologia*, for Gilhus, too, seems to think that it was a feature mainly of women's festivals, even going so far as to write that it appeared also “in the Eleusinia (where men also participated).” 33. This is a bit of an understatement.

– i.e., that the use of laughter in rituals having to do with birth, for example, has little to do with the use of laughter in rituals having to do with death. I have argued, opposingly, that at least for the Greeks ritual laughter is connected across individual rituals and indeed that rituals featuring laughter often make reference to both birth and death or other pairings of Gilhus’ ‘opposing’ areas.

⁹⁸³ Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, *Laughing Gods, Weeping Virgins: Laughter in the History of Religion*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997. 4.

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